ONE FOR FRANCE AND ONE FOR ME! by GEORGES SURDEZ

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Adventure

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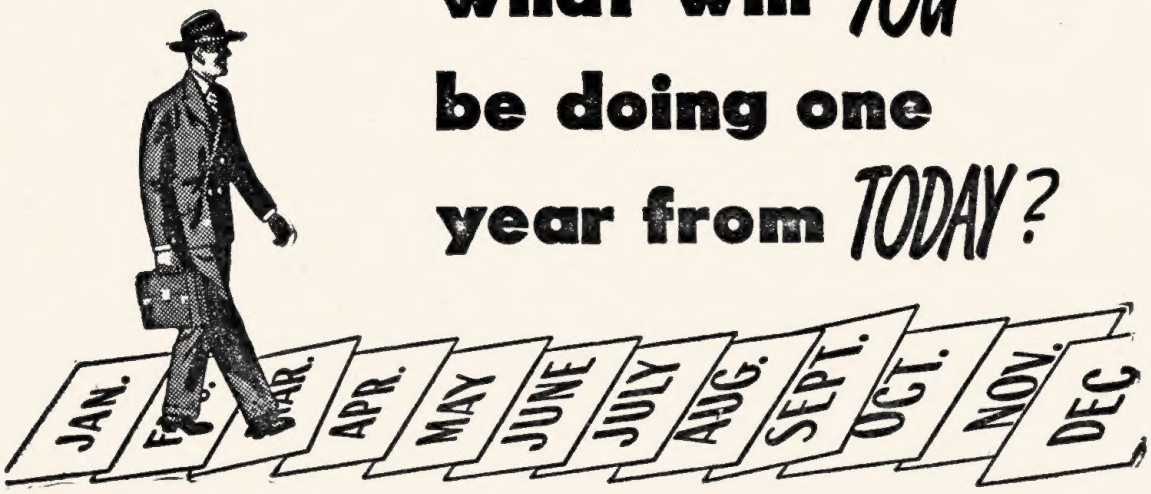

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(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

Vol. 114, No. 3 for January, 1946 Best of New Stories

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Chains for Columbus (3rd of 5 parts)..... ALFRED POWERS 104

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Lost Trails..... Where old paths cross 144

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Cover painted for Adventure by Robert Stanley

Kenneth S. White, Editor

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ONE FOR FRANCE

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FRANK KRAMER

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Norman Kenton remained by the doorway for several seconds, while his eyes grew accustomed to the dim light, and the noise of the army truck, going on to Haut-Mouthiers, dwindled down the road. He identified details, everything checked—the emplacements of doors and windows, the location of the bar, the signs

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They crouched in the lee of a stone fence when a faint whirring on the road warned them that the infuriated policemen were approaching on their bikes.

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AND ONE FOR ME

By GEORGES SURDEZ

on the walls, the big woman with the moon face. It was as if he had walked back into a half-forgotten dream, wide awake. This must be the place he sought, the first link in the chain—but French inns often resembled one another. Those signs on the walls were advertisements distributed by the thousand. For a flashing moment, the old nervous uncertainty, the old anguish, hovered near again.

Then his glance sought a small crack in the corner of a window, and it was there. He looked up and found a hole in the metal shade of a lamp, a bullet hole. He had seen it that night, two years ago, and sick and weak as he had been, he had wondered how and when it had got there.

"Good day," he said.

A vague answer came from behind the bar, the three customers lifted their eyes briefly, nodded. That was all.

Norman crossed the room, and was conscious of his heels striking too loudly on the worn, scrubbed boards. He was twenty-three, a tall, rangy young fellow. His hair was whitish-blond, his skin very fair, his face round, and he seemed boyish until one noted the firmness of mouth and chin. He wore an American uniform, the bars of a captain, the wings of the Air Force, and a few ribbons.

"Good day," he repeated to the woman. He smiled, for this was a moment he had aspired to, dreamed about. There would be recognition, surprise, exclamations of pleasure.

"Good day," she replied. Then added in a low, monotonous tone, "We have nothing except wine, cider, apéritifs. We have no champagne, no cognac, nothing for the Americans."

"Don't you remember me, *madame?*" he asked, laughing.

"No champagne, no cognac, nothing but wine and—"

"I'll have a glass of white wine, thanks." Norman removed his cap, mopped his forehead, grinned as engagingly as he knew how. "Last time I was here, you gave me some pretty good cognac."

She stared at him, while her hands moved and produced a damp glass and a dripping bottle. She poured and, even in that poor light, the American could see that her shaking hand imparted a trembling motion to the golden stream. She knew him, all right. "You must remember me, *madame*. I was here for two days." He nodded toward the back door. "I slept behind the crates, in the little store room. I was escaping."

The woman did not smile. She recorked the bottle and shoved the glass across the zinc counter. "That'll be seven francs, *monsieur.*" She took breath and continued, "So many came through, we cannot remember them all. I regret."

Norman was disappointed and growing angry. She knew who he was. Why was she so wary? What did she think he had come back for? And he was growing restless, because he felt the others were watching, listening, that they knew also. Surely, the war was over. There was no chance of the Germans returning, not for half a century, anyway, so having concealed flyers was something to be proud of. He lighted a cigarette.

"Perhaps you can tell me where to find Monsieur Frederic?"

"No. I don't know him."

"Come, *madame,*" Norman gestured. "He brought me in here. I heard you call him Monsieur Frederic—you even referred to his father. I heard you. You must remember him."

"I don't know him, *monsieur,* I regret."

"A tall man, maybe my height, *madame,*" Norman insisted. "Must be around thirty, dark hair." He laid a finger on his cheek, below the right eye. "He has a little scar here—"

"Monsieur speaks French very well," Madame replied.

"That's what you said that night." Norman drained his glass, motioned for it to be refilled. "And you must remember I told you I'd been in France a lot as a boy, had lived in Bordeaux. You told me you had a brother in the wine business there. When I told you I'd been in North Africa, you said you had an aunt living at Mascara."

"That is true," she admitted. She peered at him, shook her head slowly. "Perhaps it is your uniform. I do not remember you. There were many, many."

"Did they all bleed all over this floor?" Norman shrugged, said, "You don't remember me. But you must remember Monsieur Frederic."

"I don't know him, *monsieur.*"

"FREDERIC, Frederic?" A cackling voice lifted near Norman. The old man had come over. He was incredibly old, gave the impression of faded clothing draped on a frame of sticks and wire. "Maybe you mean the doctor's lad, Frederic Langlois? Well, let me tell you—"

"Father Brousson," Madame interrupted, "sit down and don't pester my customers. Or I'll have to tell your granddaughter where you spend the money she gives you."

One of the farm hands, a large man of fifty-odd, came forward quietly. "Come and sit down, Father Brousson." He shook his head at Norman meaningfully.

"All right, all right," Father Brousson grumbled, "but I'm not afraid of him." He staggered a bit as he peered up at Norman and said truculently, "You're one of them, eh? They said you were all gone. No more Boches, they said. And here you are again! Can't you stay home?"

The farm hand towed him gently to a chair. Madame's face was tinged with blood now, she

touched her forehead and wiggled a finger. Norman felt baffled and furious. These people did not want to talk and when they did not wish to talk, they did not talk. Their kind had frustrated even the Gestapo, which had had means and methods to loosen tongues.

There seemed little purpose in insisting. He would ask about Frederic in the small city ahead, a mile and a half away. The boys on the truck must have turned his bag over to the MBS group, and some of the Americans there would know people who could supply information.

"Is your husband here, *madame?*"

"He said he'd be back at sunset."

"Perhaps he would remember me."

"Perhaps. I doubt it. There were many, many."

"I'll wait a while. Could I have something to eat?"

Norman could, it turned out. The woman spread a checkered cloth on a table, brought him bread, cold meat and some sort of cream cheese. She vanished and returned with an omelette and fried potatoes. Food was very scarce in Paris and in large cities, but it seemed plentiful enough in this region. The coffee was a bitter-tasting substitute, but better than nothing. It was growing late, night was coming. Yet Norman sat there, stubbornly, smoking cigarettes and drinking white wine.

The old man and the farm hands had gone. Other customers had come in. But they sat at separate tables, did not talk much. At the table next to him sat a man who was evidently a stranger, like himself, because everyone had looked him over. He was rather younger than most of the men one saw around—twenty-eight or thirty, perhaps five feet-ten inches, solidly put together. His civilian suit was a wartime weave, poor, wrinkling tissue, dyed an indefinite autumn-leaf color. He wore a thin sweater under his coat, a cloth cap, no tie, and his strong shoes were dusty.

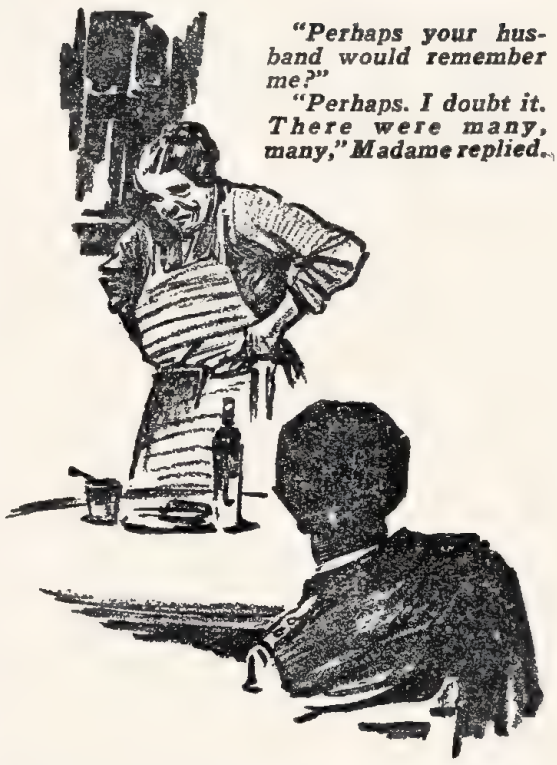
Norman thought there was something familiar about his face, the set of his shoulders. His eyes were gray-blue, his cheeks hard and ruddy, as if compounded of brick dust, his hair thick and reddish. He caught Norman's eyes upon him, returned the stare, scanned his face, his uniform and looked away.

"Can I have some cigarettes, *madame?*" Norman asked.

"This isn't a tobacconist's. I don't sell cigarettes and—" Madame looked at him and concluded meaningfully, "I don't buy them."

Norman had two cartons of smokes in his bag. That did not do him much good at the moment. After rising and sitting down again twice, the red-haired young man made up his mind, came over and offered his package to Norman. It was a well-known American brand, hence undoubtedly filched from Army stocks.

"They don't exactly give them away. The



"Perhaps your husband would remember me?"

"Perhaps. I doubt it. There were many, many," Madame replied.

man grinned, after obeying Norman's gestured invitation to sit down. "Fifty-five francs. But when one's a steady smoker—" he shrugged and grinned. "If anybody had told me, back in '39, that I'd be glad to pay more than two francs apiece for fags—" He broke into a laugh. "But then, one earned less then in a day than one does in an hour now. Of course, the smart thing would be to sell, not to buy. Somehow, though, I'm always a buyer."

"It's a crowded racket even now," Norman said.

"Sure, everybody's in it." The man lowered his voice. "I'll bet you the old dame sells cigarettes and cognac and meat and everything. They all do. But we're strangers and we've got to be careful. My name's Auberne, Jean Auberne. I'm from the North."

"My name's Kenton."

"You're a captain, aren't you? You're young for it, but you're in the American army. Aviation? Thought so." He sucked at his cigarette. "I was in the Engineers. Demobilized in July '40. Went through the phony war, you know—nine months of pinochle and six weeks of foot racing. I was shipped as a specialist-machinist to Germany, stayed there fourteen months. Got back to France, somehow. I was in Lille when your guys landed.

"You're wondering why I'm tramping around these parts, eh? Well, it's a funny story. I'm looking for a dame I haven't seen or heard from in six years. She scrammed with an aunt when the Boches first came through. Maybe she was

killed when the planes shot up refugees on the roads. About a month back, somebody told me her aunt had a sister living around here, in a village near Haut-Mouthiers, and I've been looking around. She'd be around twenty-six now, and probably married."

"I hope not," Norman said mechanically.

"Oh, I wouldn't be hurt or even sore if she was. But the war's over, and you have to balance things, to make sure. I don't know if you get what I mean by having to know."

"I think I do," Norman replied.

He liked this fellow, who appeared so strong, simple and direct. Yes, he understood him, knew what it meant to have to know before settling down mentally. That was really his motive for being here, for postponing his return home and spending a leave in France. In a way, he wanted to liquidate the last concerns of war.

TWO years and some weeks before, Norman had parachuted down some seventy miles from this inn. He had been the last to jump out of a burning bomber, having taken over the controls from the dead pilot. Being the last, he had landed many miles from the other survivors, in a wheat field. He had been pretty shaken up by the fall, had suffered cuts on his knee and face, and one ankle on the bum. The Krauts' searching parties, radiating from the pyre of the crashed plane, had passed so near that at times he had heard them talk.

Norman had waited for darkness, then hobbled and crawled to a farm. From then on, it had been a story familiar to scores of men. He had hidden in barns and stables, in churches and cellars, he had traveled by night, sometimes thirty miles, sometimes five, passed from hand to hand like a bundle in transit.

The people who had sheltered and guided him seemed confused at times, too. There had been many false starts and sheepish returns. Norman had been an escaping flyer, and as deadly for those who helped him as a typhoid carrier. Because he was living from moment to moment, these nocturnal ramblings had seemed normal, casual. He had grown accustomed to pain, fatigue, anxiety.

Once, at a crossroads at three in the morning, his guide had abandoned him suddenly, and he had been picked up by a German patrol. A German patrol made up of renegade Russians. Not two miles further, that patrol had been ambushed and wiped out by partisans. The German officer—there were twelve men—had taken time to fire a bullet into Norman, which had passed through just below the right shoulder.

Norman had dropped to the road, and fell unconscious a few seconds later. He had awakened—he never would know how long after—on the floor of this very room, with a circle of faces surrounding him, and that lamp with the pierced shade swaying above them. They had hidden him in the back room for two days, behind empty crates and cases. Then he had been carried by night to another house, the house he would never forget.

For many days he had been in a very bad way, what with loss of blood, fever and irregular care. Then he had been well enough to walk, and had had to continue his dreary journey. He had reached England three months and four days after crashing.

He had returned to France to fight and had been wounded again—on the ground, doing liaison work with the tanks, late in December. He had come back at the first chance, and had located one of the people he had met, the woman whom he had called Madame Moon. He had known that she and her husband kept a country inn only a short distance from Haut-Mouthiers. He had felt that she could help him, because she had been so kind, and that through her he would find all the others, enabling him to sort of swim back upstream into his memory.

Norman felt that he had to see all those people again, under normal conditions, when his nerves were not jangling, his stomach knotting under suspense and sheer fear, when he would be a sane, healthy human being and not a suffering, dangerous parcel.

During his weeks of convalescence, Norman thought a great deal about the people who had helped him—particularly Emilie and, of course, Frederic. She had been good to him, had nursed him back to health, though he probably meant nothing more to her than just another sick chump, who happened to be fighting for her country. He'd like to see her again, however, thank her, maybe invite her over to the States. With her husband, of course.

Yes, he admitted to himself, he had had a crush on Emilie, but most patients "fell" for a nurse, and she had been his nurse. He conceded that if it had not been for Frederic, who was a fine fellow, he might have let himself go a bit.

She was near, very near now, within three miles at most, perhaps two, three hundred yards away. Norman did not know where the house was. But it was not far out of town. He had the vanity normal to most young men, and he looked forward to having her see him not as an unkempt, sickly tramp, but as a captain in the Air Force.

She came from a prosperous family, of that he was sure. She was not a farm girl, you could tell that in ever so many ways. Leaving everything else out of consideration, she was a good looker, with her upswept ash blond hair, those big eyes that were really violet, and that beautiful mouth with the slight pout of the underlip. A fine figure, too, enough of this and that here and there, slim legs, slender ankles and wrists, delicate hands that made you think

of poems about fingers like lily petals and such junk. She was exactly two years older than he was, and they had laughed very hard when they had discovered they had the same birthday.

But she was nuts about her husband. That was a fact. She never talked for long without mentioning Frederic. When he had been out on a job, Norman would know it, because even if she tried to cover up, she'd act nervous and he would see her mutter prayers. At that, Frederic was not a bad looking guy, tall, with broad shoulders and a sort of easy-going swagger. A bit on the foppish side, even if he was a guerrilla leader, used goo to keep that thick hair down.

Yet he was a cool and snappy scrapper. Norman had seen him at work, in the blinding glare of a portable searchlight. That Russian-Boche must have known he hadn't finished Norman with the first shot, and he'd reined in his horse, was bearing down again with the pistol. Frederic had grabbed him by the leg, pulled him out of the saddle, and smacked him across the face with the barrel of a gun. Then shot him dead on the fly, as he was reeling about.

"*Poissez l'anglais et fichez l'camp!*" he had yelled—"Grab the Englishman and beat it." Norman had passed out then. But he could never forget that voice, and even forgave Frederic for thinking him British.

Emilie had told him that Frederic had been decorated in 1939, Legion of Honor, Military Medal, War Cross, the complete set. So he had managed to see action even during the phony war. But she had told him other stories about his work in the region for the Resistance. He ranked as an officer in the French Forces of the Interior, the F. F. I., now referred to in some papers as the *Fifies*. It was odd, he remembered thinking, how a woman who still looked like a girl could thus boast about a man older than herself, like a mother telling you how smart her kid was in school.

CHAPTER II

GALLIC GANGSTER

"I HUNG around the station most of the day," Auberne was saying. He had talked a lot, and now he repeated that statement.

Norman smiled in apology. "Sorry. Well, I didn't come by train. I intended to, but a friend of mine stationed in Paris took me in tow and found me a ride on a supply truck headed this way. He said we'd make it faster, as the railroads still run sort of ragged. He was right. We have supplies depots along this route, you know."

"They have military police here as well as

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supplies," Auberne said. "Only a few, though." He grinned. "You fellows are funny. You ask a guy for cigarettes or chocolates, and you never know whether he'll tell you to go to the devil, make you a present, or cheat you on the price."

Norman laughed. "Well, I had a meal and a few drinks here, and it'll cost me quite a lot of francs. The last time, I was sheltered, fed and liquored gratis. Excuse me—"

Norman rose to intercept a short, heavy-set man of fifty or so who had just entered the inn —the owner returned at last.

"Good evening, *monsieur*. Do you remember me?"

"I've seen you before," the man admitted, peering up. He smiled, but without enthusiasm. "You came through with the Americans last summer?"

"Oh, no, long before that. I was brought in one night, bleeding like a pig, by Monsieur Frederic."

"Yes, yes. Well, glad you are better. Excuse me."

The man did not even offer to shake hands. Madame Moon smiled quietly. Norman felt an unreasonable surge of resentment. After all, these people owed him nothing—it was the other way around. But he had returned, oozing gratitude, and he was welcomed with that casual, "Glad you are better."

"You remember me?" he insisted, standing still.

"I think so. There were many, many. Even wounded, many."

"Not that many." Norman was nervous. "Look, the Boches have gone, there's nothing to be worried about. All I want to know is where I can locate Monsieur Frederic."

"I don't know him."

"He brought me in, he was the chief of—"

"There were many partisans. I wasn't supposed to know them."

"All right. But I can pay you now, for—"

"That was all taken care of. There was an organization, you see. We were compensated in various ways. I assure you, you owe us nothing."

The owner had edged away toward the back door and Norman followed him. The customers were listening intently, trying at the same time to appear unconcerned. Norman felt ridiculous. He lowered his voice.

"I must thank you. But, could you do me a favor, *monsieur*? How do I go about locating—"

"You might ask at the Town Hall." Monsieur nervously pulled out a package of cigarettes, American, lighted one, then offered one to Norman as an afterthought. He looked worried, annoyed. "The various bands have dispersed. Those of the proper ages are in the army, some back at work." He reached out and shook Norman's hand impulsively. "Yes, I do remember you. But, well, there are reasons, good reasons —excuse me!"

He dodged around Norman and vanished through the back door. The American went back to his table, settled the bill with money from his breeches pocket.

"Look," Auberne suggested, "you've swapped drinks for cigarettes. Have a glass on me, eh?"

"Glad to."

They settled down again. Norman's mind had leaped ahead—he must locate the Americans in town, that would not be hard. They'd put him up somewhere. They always did. Tomorrow, he would go to the town hall and inquire about Frederic—and Emilie.

"Don't disturb yourselves, gentlemen," said a voice from the doorway. A gendarme stood there, a sergeant of gendarmes, big and burly, clean-shaven and well-fed. Another gendarme was behind him, casual and smiling. "Everyone produce papers—"

Evidently, this was not an unusual event. The customers calmly placed papers on the tables, and the gendarme passed around. He kidded with people he knew. At last, he came over and scanned the card and passes presented by Jan Auberne, asked him a few questions, as to his exact domicile, in Lille, his military status, not yet recalled to the forces, and so on. Then the gendarme straightened, saluted. "And you, *mon capitaine*?"

"American aviator," Norman informed him.

"I see. But I must respectfully ask you for a card, a pass—"

"I'm a captain in the United States Army."

"I must insist, Captain."

There was a brief argument, at the end of which Norman shrugged, drew out his wallet. He opened it, and was startled. Not only was his money gone, but his papers as well. He did not understand it. One of the two guys on the truck could have taken the stuff, but they must have known he could locate them again—he knew their names and so on. They had not looked like thieves, but then a successful thief seldom looks like one. Boy, would he fix them when he saw them again! The crooks—

"My papers have been stolen, Sergeant," he said.

"Regrettable, Captain. I must ask you to come with us to the station, and—"

"Nothing doing," Norman snapped. "I'm an American Army officer. I refuse to—"

"I regret extremely, Captain." The gendarme spread his hands, was mockingly polite, enjoying showing off to the customers of the inn. "I am quite convinced that you are what you say. However, there is no proof, and I am not permitted to act according to my beliefs. You will have to come along."

"I will not. I'll walk in and report to the American officer, or you can inform him and have him send out military policemen." Norman set himself as the gendarme moved forward. "I warn you that I will not tolerate—"

But the gendarme's hand was on his arm.

He pushed it off, rose, his fists clenched. The cop reached out again, and Norman swung on his jaw. The gendarme sat down. He got up slowly, his rather sallow face growing whiter. He unbuckled his pistol holster.

"You're under arrest."

"You have no business arresting me. I'm—"

Norman saw the gun come out, and he caught the gendarme's wrist. It was a bewildering situation—he did not know whether he was within his rights, whether he would be blamed later for resisting or not resisting. But there was no sense in getting shot. The next moment, there was a scramble. Customers ran out, jostling the cop at the door. Madame screamed.

The gendarme struck him with his left fist, and he struck the gendarme with his right fist. The gendarme sat down again. Norman had his gun in his hand.

The other gendarme came forward, slowly, his revolver poised. He stared at Norman, and his lips moved soundlessly. The American had swung the gun, held it by the grip. Time decomposed into endless spaces that were split seconds. Norman knew that that fool cop was making up his mind to shoot, and that unless he fired first . . .

Then someone slipped forward, Auberne. He knocked the cop's arm down, the revolver discharged, dropped to the floor. The red-haired man kicked it away.

"Get out, Captain, get out—"

Norman obeyed that urgent voice automatically. He ran for the door, heard Auberne crying out, "Throw the gun away, throw the gun away," and dropped the weapon. A second later, he crashed into the small crowd formed by the customers in the darkness outside. No one interfered with him.

ONCE on the road, he hesitated, then orientated himself and started for the town of Haut-Mouthiers, somewhere in the night ahead. He ran for two or three hundred yards, slowed to a walk, panting and sweating. This was a mess. The French were very touchy about mauling cops. He had best find the American officer in charge, explain the situation. Perhaps they could get him away before morning, or hide him until things cleared up.

"If I ever lay my hands on that Jake—" he grumbled.

Jake had been the lanky, good-natured driver of the truck. Now that Norman thought of it, he and his helper had been rather eager to have him along. He should have known they were up to something—army truck drivers were not usually so fond of aviators. But then a guy naturally trusted men in his country's uniform. Norman had simply forgotten that the war was over. He began to have very grave doubts as to whether he would find his bag after all. There was a brooch in it, a gift for Emilie, a cameo. The rest could be replaced for money.

"Captain, Captain—"

"Right here, Auberne," Norman said, stopping.

"They have bikes." Auberne was breathing hard. "They have bikes. Lucky for us, they went the wrong way, but they'll come back soon—they're mad enough to shoot. We better get off the road—"

It was preposterous to think that gendarmes would shoot down an American officer on a French highway. But many preposterous things had happened in France in the past few years, and supposing that they would, he, Norman, would be dead. The cops would pay dearly for his death, but that would not do him much good.

He followed Auberne's shadowy form across the ditch, through a hedge, across a field. They crouched in the lee of a stone fence when a faint whirring on the road warned them that the infuriated policemen were approaching astride their bikes. The cops halted not far away, shouted challenges, summons for the fugitives to surrender. They fired four or five shots. It was quite like old times to see the short flames stab the night, to hear the cracking detonations and the echoes.

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"A sore gendarme is a mean guy to fool with," Auberne remarked. "They'll try to intercept you before you can make the American depot in town. We better circle—"

They circled, then walked cautiously across country, in the general direction of town. They heard the gendarmes shouting in the distance, and it was amusing. But if those two should alert the whole detachment, it would be another matter! Norman's mind had settled back to normal, and he could think clearly. The details of the row in the inn emerged one by one.

"Do you speak English, Auberne?"

"No, Captain. Why?"

"Shows you what excitement can do. You yelled at me to drop the cop's gun, and I did. But I keep hearing you yelling it in English. I could swear you talked English—"

Auberne, striding three feet away, chuckled audibly.

"I know how to say 'hello' and 'O.K.' and 'how much,' but not much more. Funny about that, too—you'd smacked one of the cops, which is bad enough. But I thought that if you took away his revolver, they might call it theft. It's all right for a guy to be charged with punching a gendarme, no disgrace, but stealing is shameful. Queer what you think of—"

It was a splendid night, dusted with stars. The night birds were busy, the insects twittered, the wind sighed through the foliage and hummed in the telegraph wires. Norman relaxed by degrees. There was nothing to worry about, really. He would have to apologize, probably be fined. Few men bore a grudge long over an exchange of cuffs. Luckily, he could speak French very fluently, and that counted.

"Auberne," he said, as they sat down for a rest and a quiet smoke, "I think you're in a worse mess than I am. And you got into it to help me. What are you going to do?"

"Bah, the cops won't remember my name from reading it once, and after I've showed you the way to town, I'll cut across and be in another town by morning, hopping a train. I was nearly through anyway—only a few more small hamlets to look up."

"Do you need any dough? I'll be able to get hold of some as soon as I can get in touch with pals in Paris. I can phone."

"I'll be all right. Soon as I get back home, I can get a job at seventy-five francs an hour. I'm a specialist." He sucked at his cigarette, held inside his cupped hand, went on, "Don't fret about me. I didn't hit anybody. And that cop whose gun I knocked down would thank me for keeping him from shooting you, when it comes out you're all right, a real officer. You are, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"Not that it would matter much if you weren't." Auberne paused, seemed to reflect. "Can't blame the cops too much. There've been phony American officers around, getting supplies out of dumps, gasoline, cigarettes, rations, handing out forged orders—"

"How do you know that, Auberne?"

"How? Well, easy enough. I'm a stranger around, I've had to report to police stations a lot—everyone's still pretty jittery—and one hears talk. When the war was going on, you can't imagine the amount of stuff that was wrangled out of the Army dumps." Auberne added tactfully, "Oh, it's the same in all armies. In February '40, two guys from my battalion swiped a lorry full of cheese, and peddled the stuff privately. And what was done to the wine rations was a shame."

They tamped out their butts carefully, rose and walked on. They had circled far, and the lights of the town, visible in rifts of foliage from certain high vantage points, still were far away. But daylight would not come until three-thirty, and a glance at his watch showed Norman it was only nine-ten. He was beginning to enjoy this experience. It duplicated his former night voyages closely, but not too closely for comfort. After all—

"HALT!"

Norman obeyed instantly. And, although it was dark, he instinctively lifted his hands. He felt that Auberne had frozen in his tracks also.

"Don't move, we are armed."

"All right," Norman agreed.

So far as he could tell in the obscurity, they were in an orchard. Dimly outlined, a few yards to the right, was a lofty barn. He could not distinguish the sentry, several feet away in the darkness, save as a lump of shadow in the shadow.

"You are the two who ran from the cops at the inn?"

"Yes," Auberne said.

"The cops have thrown out a cordon to catch you."

"Thanks," Norman said, dryly.

"You will turn right, pass along the barn, climb over the fence. You will be on a vicinal pathway. You will turn left, walk five hundred meters. You will then hear further directions."

"Where are we going?"

"You will be told. Do not try to swerve, you shall be under observation constantly. We have orders not to shoot until you disobey."

"Just who the devil are you?" Norman wondered.

"Just a few guys with quick-firing carbines. Get going!"

The two fugitives got going, gained the vicinal pathway. They plodded along the dirt surface.

"Well?" Norman breathed.

"Maquisards," Auberne suggested. "This region had a lot of them, and some refused to turn in their guns when the edict was issued from Paris. They've been making some trouble, I

hear, but they don't shoot people for nothing."

Norman, like almost everyone in France, had heard of the remnants of "resistance" bands who had rebelled against the order to disarm. As a matter of fact, until the actual end of hostilities, the order had been almost a dead letter, since in some regions it did not apply, particularly around the pockets of German resistance along the Coasts, and it was difficult to enforce an edict in one place and not in another. But since the surrender of Germany, the gendarmes, the city police, were working hard at controlling the former Underground. A large part of the press claimed that this disarmament followed political lines.

"Halt!" another man hailed them from cover. "Turn left, cross the field, and follow the path on the other side, toward the right. You will be given instructions somewhere."

They crossed the field, found the path and turned right.

"What would happen if we didn't do as they say?" Norman asked.

"I don't want to find out," Auberne replied. Somehow, the fear of discovery by the gendarmes had become unimportant, and they smoked openly. "Bah, Captain, what can they do to us? Rob us? I haven't enough to matter much. Maybe they just want to find out who we are."

"Maybe. But the longer I wait, the more chance for the cops to get to the American officer first and lie me into a lot of trouble"—he explained about the theft of his money and papers by the truckmen—"and the further away will those two have gone."

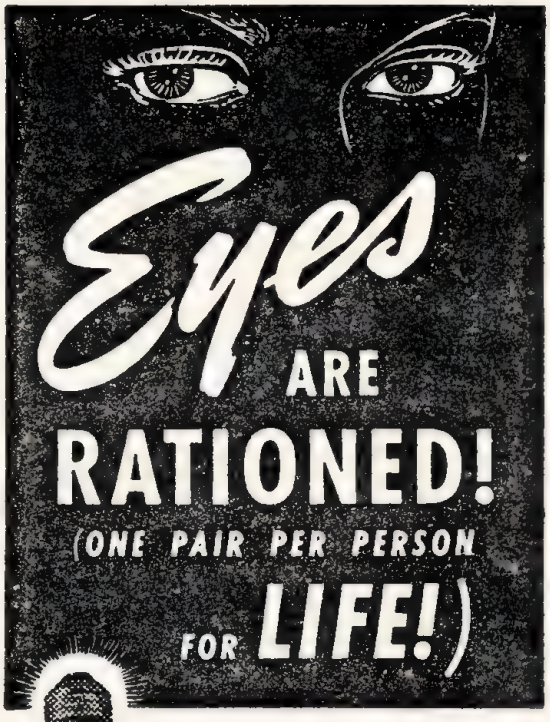
"Well, maybe these chaps can take you to the people you are looking for," Auberne said. "I heard some of your talk with the innkeeper, back there."

"Halt! Turn left, climb over the hillock, go down the other side, cross the small wooden bridge and keep straight ahead on the path."

Norman continued to obey; there was nothing else to do. The Maquisards, if they were that, seemed to have a net of guards over the whole district, and worked more openly than they had when the Germans had been around. The two walked several miles, thus, back and forth, in a puzzling pattern. It was after ten when a man appeared in a path before them, and suggested they follow him. From his voice, he was very young, perhaps nothing more than a boy. He led them at an amazing gait along other paths, across fields, until they saw the outline of a rather large house against the sky.

"Go in there," said their guide.

They passed through a wide door, and then there was a sharp sound behind them. They were locked in. They lifted their hands to shield their eyes, as a strong light was turned on. They were in a rather large room, with cement walls and floor, which probably had been used as a garage at some time. A man in



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"I told you I'd be busy, chérie," he said. "Could you excuse me for a few minutes longer?"

rough clothing, wearing heavy shoes, stood before them. He was nineteen or twenty, and held a big German automatic by the trigger guard. He seemed surprised at Norman's uniform, but said nothing, went to a closet in the far wall, opened it. It was half-full of old coats and overalls. He reached in with one arm, appeared to pull the whole business out, revealing a door. He motioned for them to pass through.

Norman and Auberne found themselves in what looked like a large pantry. It was hard to be sure, because the light here was very weak. Another young chap beckoned from the door, led them along a short corridor, opened a door, said, "Wait in here."

The American almost yelled with excitement. This was the small room in which he had spent several weeks. The furniture was the same; he recognized the design of the wallpaper. The bed was made, everything was in order, though rather dusty.

He went to the window, opened the glass panes and worked on the hooks of the blinds. A voice warned him from the outside, "Don't open. Keep away."

Auberne had sat down philosophically, holding his cap in one hand, a cigarette in the other. "The last," he announced. Norman was too excited to sit. He moved restlessly, touched a book here and there, recognized a title. He felt immensely strong and well, remembering those long days of strain.

"Come on!"

The door opened and the young chap beckoned. They followed him along the hall, turned right, entered a spacious room, a sort of salon, Louis XV style. There were paintings on the walls, and a big chandelier of glass and brass. But the light came from a small kerosene lamp on a desk.

"They're here, chief."

"All right. Wait outside the door." A man moved from a corner settee to the center of the room. He was tall, dark-haired, and had a small scar below the right eye. He wore a good, new civilian suit, probably of British make, a suit

worth fifteen to twenty thousand francs in the current market.

Norman recognized Monsieur Frederic.

"OH, IT'S you, Kenton," Frederic said, almost casually. He offered his hand. "I heard you'd reached England safely. Glad to see you."

"So am I, Ricky."

"Don't call me Ricky, I beg you," Frederic brought out a silver case, offered Norman a cigarette, then gestured for Auberne to help himself. The three stood in the middle of the room; there was no invitation to sit down. "I had you brought here under a misapprehension, really. I heard you'd had a run in with the gendarmes—"

"We did." Norman explained rapidly. Then he started to ask the question that burned his lips. "How is—"

"In a moment, please," Frederic checked him. He nodded toward Auberne without smiling. "You say that this man helped you?"

"You said it, he helped me. He took a chance to—"

Frederic turned to Auberne. "I suppose you can identify yourself, that you have a good reason for being here?"

"Is this a police station?" Auberne retorted.

"No. I merely object to strangers. What's your story?"

Auberne produced his papers, told his story. Frederic nodded, summoned a guard. "Escort Monsieur to the cellar. Have him talk to Dutheil about the Engineers and to Viatte about Lille." He lifted a finger. "There is as yet no reason to be rough with him, remember that." He then motioned for Norman to be seated. "Now, let's talk . . ."

But as Auberne and the guard, who cuddled a German carbine under one arm, passed through the door, a woman entered, with a rather determined step. It was not Emilie. Yet, to his bewilderment, she went up to Frederic, embraced and kissed him. The tall Frenchman freed himself gently, somewhat embarrassed.

"I told you I'd be busy, *chérie*," he said. "Could you excuse me a few minutes longer?"

"Aren't you going to introduce me to Captain Greenwood?"

"This isn't Greenwood, my dear."

"Oh! I thought my furs had come."

There was a noticeable stretch of awkward silence. The close relationship between Frederic and this girl was evident, and because of his own feeling of admiration and respect for Emilie, Norman was shocked. But he was compelled to make a grudging admission—Frederic could pick women.

This was another knockout, tall, slim, with a heart-shaped face lighted by tawny eyes, a great mane of golden-red hair piled high on her head. She revealed a lot of legs and arms, every item well above acceptable specifications. But Norman thought she looked rather hard around the mouth and eyes.

"Well, are you going to introduce us?" she challenged.

"Adele, this is *Monsieur le capitaine* Kenton. Kenton, *ma femme*."

Femme might mean wife or woman. Norman bowed over the hand stretched to him. But he felt as if he had been punched in the jaw. If this were Frederic's wife, who or what had Emilie been? But Emilie had spoken of Frederic constantly, and unmistakably as *mon mari*, my husband. Well, there had been a rift—such things happened.

"The captain speaks French?" Adele asked, after a pause.

"Yes, *madame*," Norman admitted. He knew that his face had flushed and that he was behaving awkwardly. He started to talk rapidly. "I am sorry that I prove a disappointment, *madame*. Your husband and I—"

"Oh, it doesn't really matter." Adele sat down, arranged her short skirt, locked shapely hands on her lap, obviously settling herself, in defiance of Frederic's wishes. "It's only that Frederic told me he had asked the captain, the other captain, to pick up some furs at an address I know of in Paris. A German officer had collected them during his stay, and he must have been killed or something, for he did not show up again before *they* left."

"Dear, the captain and I have to talk—"

"Go ahead and talk," she agreed. "You never minded my being around before. I know enough already to have the whole district shot"—Adele laughed—"including myself . . . Come in, come in," she called in answer to a knock on the door.

THE door opened and a French version of a tea-wagon rolled in before a sort of stooped colossus, a man six or seven inches over six feet, and evidently a cretin. He was deft with his hands, however, spread a cloth, arranged dishes. There was a roast capon, golden brown and tempting, cold cuts and even *foie gras*. A small tin of that cost twelve hundred francs, almost twenty-five dollars, on the black market, and this was a very large lump. There was fresh, crisp bread. There were bottles of wine, including a champagne magnum, in a cooling bucket. And a flask of venerable cognac, in a thin wire mesh.

Adele played hostess, and for fifteen minutes, the conversation was banal and spasmodic. Adele evidently was familiar with American decorations, for she read his record on his chest with ease, ribbon by ribbon. She laughed easily, had a quick sense of humor, and, despite his prejudice, Norman was beginning to like her. Frederic ate too, very swiftly, and drained several glasses of wine. He appeared nervous and irritated.

"Now, if you'll excuse us, dear," he said at last.

"You can talk before me, Freddy, I'm mute as the grave."

"Nevertheless, you mentioned Greenwood. He would not like that, I can tell you!" Frederic finally blurted out, "Look, this isn't business, Adele. Kenton and I are friends. We haven't met for two years—"

"Frederic sheltered me when I was escaping," Norman put in.

"Oh," Adele nodded, with a look of mock awe on her pretty face. "I understand. You knew the Saint."

"The Saint?" Norman repeated.

"Saint Emilie, his old girl-friend."

"I've asked you not to say that, dear," Frederic snapped.

"I'm going to wear kid gloves, I suppose? I'm supposed to light candles, too?"

"Shut up."

"Oh, I know you can be brutal. I'm not afraid of you. I'm sick of it." She took Norman to witness. "Wouldn't it drive any woman crazy? What did she do that ten thousand other dames didn't do? And her husband had the right to do what he did—"

Frederic stepped toward her, grasped her arm, drew her erect. She opened her mouth to scream, but he clamped his left hand over her lips, roughly.

"If you bite my hand, there'll be trouble," he said. "Now, when I let go, you'll say good night to the captain and go out. I give you my word that I am fed up. If you persist in making scenes, I'll have to take serious measures. Understood?"

She nodded, and Frederic took away his hand.

"Get going," Frederic said, reaching for a cigarette.

She shook hands with Norman, glared at Frederic and walked out, slamming the door.

"Charming girl," Frederic commented, "but temperamental. Everything went all right for you, after you left here?"

"Oh, quite, quite. Not a hitch."

"Don't worry about those papers of yours, I'll have them for you in twenty-four hours, unless those drivers got themselves arrested by your people. I'm not so sure about the money, but I can give you, or lend you, a like amount. In return, however, I wish you'd make no charges."

"Well, I can't allow—"

"The official police make such dickers every day—return of stolen goods, no prosecution. By all that's holy, Kenton, we can't be more punctilious than the constituted authority—"

"What are you up to now, Frederic?"

"I dabble in banditry, in the black market. In your own country, I would be called a gangster." Frederic smiled. "Normal follow-up of war conditions, happens after every war. Nothing for you to worry about."

"You mean the police are after you?"

"Yes, eagerly." Frederic laughed outright at Norman's amazement. "I believe they have charged me with three distinct assassinations, about a dozen murders, complicity and premeditation in fifteen or sixteen other killings. Not to mention a refusal to report to the army authorities, sundry lootings and thefts, concealing of stolen property, illegal use of documents. Not to mention the misdemeanors—"

"Think you can get out of it?" Norman asked, striving to appear as matter of fact as the other.

"Not a damn chance."

"But then—"

"But then . . . some fine day not very far off I'll be caught and shot down, if I am lucky. If taken alive, I'll be tried and guillotined. That will be a striking lesson for others. So you understand that in the meanwhile . . ." He indicated the remnants of food. "Like any condemned man, I get the best of food. As you saw, I have interesting distractions. All in all, I am better off than during the Occupation. The French police are not the Gestapo, and whereas the Boches had thousands of troops, we now cope only with small squads of police. More important still, people who help me only risk a stretch in the clink, instead of execution."

"I—I understand you have separated from Emilie?"

"Yes, quite definitely."

"How is she?"

Frederic looked at Norman oddly. "Didn't you guess? She is dead."

CHAPTER III

PROTECTIVE CUSTODY

NORMAN was stunned. For a long moment, he sat in silence, then Frederic handed him a full glass. "Better take a drink, old man. Those things happen."

Yes, those things happened, the American mused, but one shouldn't forget them so easily. That spread, the champagne, the food—and the very much alive and voluptuous Adele! Frederic must have read his glance.

"I've known for a year and a half, you know," he said, in his usual, crisp voice. "I did my share of glowering and weeping. But you live with the idea a year or so, and you can talk about it without breaking down. Go ahead and drink—it will help. I should know."

Norman swallowed, coughed as the cognac burned his throat, shook his head as if to clear it. Frederic pulled a chair near, sat astride it, his chin on his hands crossed over the back.

"So it was that way, was it?" he asked, in a softer voice.

"What way?" Norman laid the glass aside.

"You loved her."

The young flyer hesitated, then nodded. "I think I did. Yes, I loved her." He wiped his face with his palms. "I loved her. More than you did. Oh, don't worry, I didn't say anything to her, because I didn't even know it then. I loved her. But you wouldn't understand."

Frederic smiled sadly. "Probably not." He touched Norman's shoulder with his fingers. "You damn fool, don't you know it was one of the routine things . . . that the sick men she tended all fell in love with her? And that with one or two unimportant exceptions, they all behaved as well as you did? She loved you, too. She told me, 'You know, your American's getting better—he's so shy and so docile. But it's happened again. The crush, the big crush!' " The guerrilla chieftain shrugged and repeated, "*Le béguin, le gros béguin.*"

"She laughed, I suppose."

"She laughed, but not at you—at the situation. It wasn't too flattering, she admitted. You were—you and the others—isolated, sick, lonely, afraid; you saw nobody but her and one or two of my fellows."

"When did she die?" Kenton asked gently.

"In December, 1943."

"Was she ill long?"

"Ill?" Frederic started, stared at Norman, then said, "Ah, yes, I see what you mean. No, not long. A few hours."

"She—she didn't suffer?"

"Are you crazy, Kenton?" The Frenchman seemed to grow angry. "Do you forget what was going on? The Boches were here, but—" He forced himself to regain his calm. "What does it matter. She died."

Emilie was dead. Norman tried to laugh, to imagine that if it had been Adele instead of Emilie, he probably would have fallen in love with Adele. She probably looked very sweet when she brought you a cup of chicken broth!

"I'll be leaving," he announced.

"I don't believe you should," Frederic reminded him. "You haven't your papers, you have no money, and it's pretty late to rouse the Americans in town. They might be very rough, mistake you for someone else, which could be very awkward."

"Someone like Greenwood."

"Precisely. And unless I am mistaken, we have a little business to attend to." Frederic went to a bell-pull, yanked once or twice, and the big chap appeared. "Clear this stuff away, Carquille. And send in Toussaint and the other. Do you understand?"

"Yes, chief."

Frederic kept the cognac bottle, the servant carried the rest of the stuff out on the little cart.

FOUR men entered a few seconds later. The one in the lead, carrying an automatic pistol, was squat, grayish, forty-five or better; two others were young chaps of nineteen or twenty, slender, beardless but with very tough, resolute expressions, toting German automatic carbines. The fourth was Jean Auberne, hands tied behind his back, barefooted. His nose leaked blood over his lip and chin, one eye was bruised and swelling.

"I said no rough stuff," Frederic observed.

"He tried to make a break, chief. What could we do?"

"Is that the truth, Auberne?" When the bound man nodded, Frederic continued, "Well, Toussaint?"

"Well, chief, this guy isn't from Lille and he didn't serve in the Engineers. I don't think he served in the French Army at all, or that he's been knocking around as long as he claims. Take a peep at his tootsies."

Norman obeyed the suggestion and looked at Auberne's feet, well-shaped, white, but noticed nothing suspicious about them. The others evidently did, including Auberne himself.

"I told you, I took a swim in the river," he said.

"Not at first. Chief, I asked him where he'd slept the past five nights. He had the names of the towns, the inns and the owners down pat. But he couldn't tell us which one had a bathtub, which one didn't. Hadn't thought of that. And you can see his feet are clean. Take a look at his shoes, they've been worn for some time. But not by him, because they chaffed his skin—pipe that fresh chaffing."

"Loosen his hands," Frederic ordered. When Auberne's wrists were freed, he handed him a cigarette, held a light. "Why not relax and talk a bit? Feel like a drink?"

"Sure, thanks." Auberne swallowed some cognac, was given a clean cloth to wipe his nose.

"Now, do you tell me or do I tell you?" Frederic wondered.

"I have nothing to tell. You guys won't believe me."

"Correct me if I'm wrong: You are an American. You were recently transferred from some combat unit to the CID, your army's Criminal Investigation Division. You worked in and around Paris on maybe two or three minor jobs. You got away with it. You're new at the game, though, and this is your own scheme. How do I know? Because it's complicated. An experienced hand follows simple lines."

"You're crazy," Auberne retorted.

"You were detailed to find out where the gasoline was stored in the region of Haut-Mouthiers. Gasoline swiped from your dumps. You know there are a few fake officers going around, signing orders for gasoline. You may even have known that there was an officer coming in on a truck, with two privates. The truck passed through town, without the officer, and you somehow got the report that there was an American officer at the inn. You went there.

"The local police have probably informed your superiors that I must be mixed up with the stolen gasoline racket around here. You thought that if the officer were a phony, he would ultimately get in touch with me. Now, I'm not concerned with stolen gasoline. I buy some for my own use, just like a respectable citizen, at black market prices. I don't mess around with the cigarette and rations business, either." Frederic smiled: "But I am interested in serious, workable schemes to steal good cars, tires, machinery, tools."

"You're crazy," Auberne repeated.

"If you take that line, you'll be shot."

Auberne tried to smile, licked his lips. The sweat started to drip down his face. Norman, watching him, suddenly realized that all this was very much in earnest, and that the man *knew* he was doomed. So he decided to intervene, rose and stepped forward.

"See here, Frederic—"

"You want to question him in English?"

"That isn't my job. What I have to say is—either this guy's Auberne, and got into this mess doing me a favor, or he's an American. So"—he waved his hand—"nothing doing! You can't touch him. Not while I'm alive, you can't!"

The Frenchmen broke into laughter and even the worried, perspiring prisoner grinned. Norman thought he understood what amused them. He was unarmed, up against four armed men in this room, plus who knew how many others in the house, did not even know his exact whereabouts. And he was giving orders, saying 'while I am alive,' when they could snuff him out any moment and nobody would ever know what had become of him.

"Better sit down, Kenton," Frederic advised quietly.

Norman sat down. Now, he felt the sweat dripping on his own body. He had as much courage as most men, but it was plain that Frederic had only to utter an order, or merely give a sign, and he would die.

"I don't like to have you killed, Auberne," Frederic went on, simply. "If you'll give me your true identity, your real mission, I can think it over. If not, what can I do except make sure you do not bother us?"

"Listen, I can prove who I am—I belonged to the Resistance in Normandy. I'll give you the dope and you can check up."

"That'll take two weeks or so, and you know it. And then we'll only know that there was a Jean Auberne."

Frederic paced back and forth for several minutes. Then coming to a stop before the flyer Frederic said, "I should locate your papers in a day or two, Kenton. Meanwhile it is best that you remain here. I am very sorry about

all this, a dreadful disappointment for you, but you came on your own decision and it can't be helped. See if you can't come to an understanding with our friend over there. I'm not particularly bloodthirsty and I'd be open to suggestion."

"I'd like to have a talk with you, Frederic," Norman said.

"Tomorrow perhaps. Good night."

He was out of the room so swiftly that Norman could not insist. Toussaint refastened Auberne's wrists with grim deliberation, looked at the younger man doubtfully, then jerked his thumb toward the open door. At first, Norman tried to keep track of his progress, but he was following a circle of light thrown on the floor by one of the young gunmen in the lead and it was difficult to see anything on the sides. They first followed the corridor, crossed a room, descended a flight of stone stairs. After that, he grew uncertain, confused, probably the effect desired.

"Watch your step—right—right—left . . ." the fellow in the van said. "All right, we're there."

A match flamed, a kerosene lamp was lighted.

"You two will stay here. Your meals will be brought you." Toussaint indicated. "Water for drinking, water for washing, the pail. That opening in the corner is a ventilator. If there is an emergency, knock several times on the tin shaft. Somebody'll come, but don't do it unless you need to. Please do not bother demolishing the door. It could be done, but there are alarms and guards at all exits. You have cigarettes? Here is an extra package."

He laid it on the table in the center of the room. It was an American brand. Then he untied Auberne's hands and went out, locking the door. The sound of footsteps receded.

NORMAN stared around. The room was perhaps twelve feet by twenty, with four narrow cots in a row at one end, each one with a plank shelf above it. Norman found nothing on these shelves but an old tin of tan shoe-polish, three dry apple cores, and a few old newspapers. There were four chairs, three tin mugs. Norman located seven books, five old French novels, one an almanac for 1908, and a manual in German, for military telegraphers.

Auberne was whistling between his teeth, walking about, less interested in the furnishings than in the walls. Two were of brick, two hewn out of solid stone. The opening of the ventilator would have been small for a good-sized cat, the door was oak reinforced with strips of iron, the keyhole on the inside covered with a metal plaque.

"Could be burned down," Auberne said, in English, indicating the lamp. "But they'd smell it."

"You're American?"

"Yes." He caught Norman's warning glance toward the ventilator. "Hell, why worry? They know. You don't think that guy was guessing, do you, sir? They were tipped off from Paris. That Langlois' a tough cookie, they tell me. They've been trying to get him for almost a year."

"What's he done?" Norman wondered: "When I knew him—"

"Sure. He had a swell record before that. But it turned out he'd been chopping down guys he didn't like, right along. The main charge is he bumped off a guy to get his woman. But he's going to go slow about doing anything to me now."

"Why? I thought you looked worried."

"I *was* worried." Auberne sat on the nearest cot, relaxed his big shoulders and smoked. "But it turns out you're an old friend, or something. He doesn't want to do you in, but he'd almost have to if he did anything to me—"

"Why?" Norman pressed.

"Because he knows you wouldn't keep quiet about me, being an American and an officer and all that. He doesn't want to harm you. But for that, I'd be cold meat. Wonder what he's going to do about it?"

"I suppose he could let us go if we promised to—"

"Hollywood stuff, sir. To start with, he knows I'm on this job and I've got to talk if I get the chance. Then my bunch would tip off the French cops and they'd come here fast."

"How could you locate it? It was dark—"

"And they made us back-track all over the lot, eh? But there are lots of clues. That little wooden bridge, for instance. Can't be so many of them around here. And there's Frankenstein's big brother, the huge goof. He must be known around here. Also, there are dames around, but they can't be living here all the time. They were having a shindig somewhere close to the place I was questioned in. Laughing, yelling, singing. Didn't you get wise those guys were half drunk? There's another house, a big one, between here and the road. Or, I mean, between the place we were in with Frederic and the road. I saw it, because I got out for a minute."

Auberne took off his coat, sweater and shirt, stretched out on the cot. "You can't think of everything. Before leaving Paris, I went and took a shower; I knew I might not have another chance for a few days. Then I came here by train, and didn't walk much in those French shoes. I phoned in, and they told me about the truck coming this way. I had the number, and when I saw it pass through without you, I knew you'd been dropped off. There are several guys knocking around posing as officers. And there are two or three real officers mixed up in things.

"It isn't gasoline alone, or smokes or rations. The whole dump over here is in a mess. Things, like food and clothing, which will be cheap in another few months, or maybe I should say cheaper, cost like hell. Other things that will be expensive people are willing to sell cheap. Paintings, for instance, and unfinished furs, and typewriters and machines.

"Stuff used to go out of France to Germany. Now, a lot of stuff is coming in. A lot of people have money in France, and they know it will lose value. The Germans spent the money forced out of France—five hundred million francs a day, which is dough even in francs—right in France. Farmers who sold meat and produce at black market prices have tubs full of big bills, bundles of five thousand-franc bills, for instance. They'll buy almost anything on speculation. And in the wrecked cities along the front, in Germany, there's a lot of stuff floating around—guys can pick it up for a cake of soap, a ration tin, a couple of chocolate bars. They can sell it in Paris, to special fences, for enough dough to raise hell with for a few days. You and I wouldn't do it, maybe, but there are plenty who will."

Auberne settled back, his head on his locked palms, staring at the low ceiling. "Funny thing, guys put on officers' uniforms for the deals. The crooks who buy from them pay more to officers."

Norman waited a while for Auberne to continue. He knew why the man chatted on and on. He had felt himself very near death, in that ornate salon, and he had a talking jag.

"Where did you learn French?" he asked.

Auberne did not reply. He had dropped off to sleep.

Norman blew out the lamp, stretched out on a cot. The army truck rolled through his mind, in a confusion of gendarmes, guns and champagne bottles. He slept.

THE door opened with a squeak, Norman awoke.

Someone entered the dark room, a match scratched, the yellow glow of the lamp followed.

"Good day," Toussaint said. Carquille, the huge cretin, followed, with a big tray. He set the table, then placed on it a big coffee pot, a pitcher of hot milk, slices of buttered bread, a pot of jam.

It turned out to be the best coffee Norman had tasted in a long while. Toussaint stood by the door, smoking, and another man, whom Norman had not seen before, another slim, sullen youth, remained outside.

"When can I see Monsieur Frederic?" Norman asked, his mouth full.

"He's gone out. Don't know."

"How long do we have to stay here?"

"Don't know."

"Can we go out for exercise? Surely, there must be—"

"No orders as to that. You'll have to ask the chief."

"Friendly guy, eh?" Auberne remarked in English.

Norman shrugged. "I saw books upstairs—any way of getting some? These are pretty stale."

"I'll bring some with your lunch." Toussaint relaxed, indicated the drawer of the table. "Chess set in there. Cards. Sylvain, got a newspaper?" He handed the flimsy journal to Norman. "Maybe you'd like to read the news."

After the table was cleared, and the jailers gone, Norman spread the paper, *La Dépèche*, described in sub-title as "the sole progressive and liberal organ in Haut-Mouthiers," on the table, so that both could read at once. An item on the front page announced the local trial, starting in a week, of Monsieur Resseguier de Bersilhon, Principal Director of the Sodac, the *Société des Acieries du Centre*. Resseguier, it seemed was the outstanding local collaborator, and had been brought back from some health resort in Savoy to stand trial.

He was an old man, like Pétain, and as great a criminal within his sphere. Although he resided most of the year in Haut-Mouthiers, the Sodac plant there was only a small branch of his many establishments. In the factory he owned near Lyons, he had manufactured mo-

tors for the Nazis; used forced labor, turned in lists of specialists who had worked for him before the Occupation and were pretending to be laborers or farm hands. Throughout, he had accepted the guidance, the orders, of a German committee managing industry in the region. He had entertained German civilians and soldiers at his home, had appeared at public functions and made speeches advising collaboration.

There was a brief account of an interview with Resseguier de Bersilhon, seventy-eight years old, distinguished, wearing the decoration of Commander in the Legion of Honor. The man seemed unaware of the seriousness of the occasion, said that he had simply bowed to necessity and veiled intimidation. He had added, cynically, that he had no doubt he would be convicted, as the nation as a whole needed scapegoats to justify and explain its smashing debacle of 1940.

There was a mention of a social gathering, for charitable purposes, at which the American captain commanding the local base would be present, with his aide, whose name was given as Lieutenant Flatfoot, which augured well for the humor of Norman's compatriots in town. Auberne and Kenton laughed inordinately at this prank.

On the fourth page, under the caption, "Our Resistants Are Still Resisting" was a humorous account of an attempted arrest by a brace of gendarmes at the Inn of the White Horse, kept by Monsieur and Madame Ploute. Two fugitives, evidently in accord with the "ex-self-styled heroes" who preyed upon the land, unwilling to get calloused palms at honest work, had escaped, following "copious and reckless fireworks."

Well, thought Norman, I have a last name at last, and it isn't so romantic: Ploute. It's Madame Ploute instead of Madame Moon! Not half so picturesque.

"What's your name, anyway?" Norman asked, after folding the paper.

"James O'Byrne, sir."

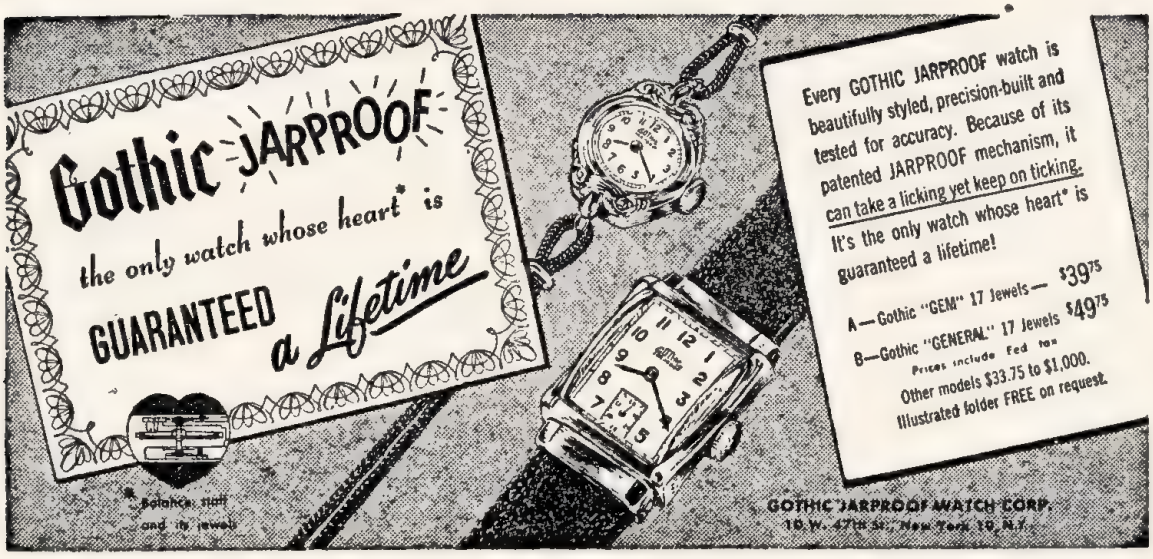
"Close fit, Auberne, O'Byrne. On purpose, or accident?"

"On purpose. I was looking through a list of names and found that one, so I had my papers made out that way." Auberne smiled. "Easier to remember who you are when someone addresses you. I got that story about the missing girl from a guy I questioned. If you take a real story, it makes better sense. Your pal was right, I haven't been at this long. I was a paratrooper until last June first.

"No, I never was in France before. But I come from Massachusetts, and there are several Canadians in our town. The old man keeps a grocery store, and lots of his customers were French. Sure, they have an accent, but so do lots of country people right in France. I shouldn't have picked the Engineers, though—they have a lot of special terms. Or Lille; it turns out they have a slang all their own up there. Funny it's easier to get away with things in a big city like Paris, where people think they're smart, than with the guys here—"

Norman thought a while, then said, "Did you know anything about a fellow called Greenwood, a captain?"

"Where did you pick that up?" Auberne was startled. "Yes, sure. Greenwood's back in the States. He was with Motor Transport. Got it just before we made Cologne—think he lost a foot. Somebody got his papers, maybe in the hospital, and started signing orders at POL dumps. It's hard to fool them now, because they can phone and check up, but when the stuff had to roll in fast, the gag worked every time. They think this Greenwood is a Tech-corporal who went AWOL from Versailles back in April." Auberne grinned. "He's pretty sharp, that guy."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"A dame in here mentioned him last night."

"Fred's girl-friend, Adele? Sure, I saw her. They were just taking me into the house when she came crying down the hall. She was sore and told another jane, inside the room to the right, that she'd made a crack and had been tossed out on her ear. She said the guy and you were holding a memorial service, whatever that meant."

"I know," Norman said soberly. "It's too long to explain."

Auberne-O'Byrne looked at him for a second, nodded.

"I think I get it," he concluded.

LUNCH came, then dinner. Another day followed, another, another. Norman found that it was no use asking for Frederic, Frederic was away. Carquille brought the meals, refilled the kerosene lamp, took out the pail, but never alone. An armed man would stand in the doorway, another in the hall. The two played chess, and checkers and cards. They talked of the war, about their families, the schools they had attended. They lost track of the days, and had to check up on the newspaper given them by Toussaint each morning. Norman called Auberne "Jimmy" or "Irish"—Auberne called him "Cap" or "Kent."

"They'll be looking for me pretty soon," Norman said after six days. "They must have missed you, and sent somebody—"

Carquille brought the meals, but never alone. An armed man would stand in the doorway, another in the hall.

Auberne nodded sadly.

"Sure. But a lot of guys don't give a damn. A lot of them get someplace, find they can hang around doing nothing and get good food—the food's good out this way, that's one thing—and keep reporting that they've got a clue. They're in no hurry. And that run-in with the cops won't do me much good, either. They don't like us messing around with the French police much—half of them are in with the guys we look for. Taking stuff from the Americans isn't any crime in some people's eyes. Our junk is just like water; it's free to anybody who wants it."

The next morning Norman awoke in pitch darkness, and waited for the sound of steps in the corridor outside. He waited a long time, and he grew hungry. Then he heard Auberne stirring on his cot, stretching, yawning.

"Breakfast must be late, Cap."

"Sure is."

Norman found that he had allowed his watch to run down; Auberne did not have one—everything in his pockets had been taken away during the search. They killed time for quite a while after that, playing games, chatting. They read books. They quarreled. After six hours—Norman had set his watch at twelve, as good a guess as any—they decided to tap on the ventilator. They tapped for two minutes the first time, then more violently later.

There was no answer. They slept again, after more games. They drank the drinking water, then started on the washing water, in a big keg. They argued as to whether they should try to knock down the door. Oddly enough, it was Auberne who was against it. He insisted that Kenton was safe, because Frederic was his friend, while the guards would not hesitate to shoot him. Norman said this was preposterous, that the guards would not differentiate.

"We can't stay here, Irish."

"You know what," Auberne insisted, "it's a trick. Like that old Mexican gag, the law of flight. If they catch us getting out, they can shoot me and have a good out—"

"You're nuts. Why couldn't they shoot us just as well in here? This dump is getting to stink."

"It's O.K. by me, I'm not fussy."

"You're yellow."

"Maybe I am, maybe I am. But I don't want to get plugged." Auberne was unshaven, and looked tough. The confinement had preyed on him, far more than on Norman, because he was uncertain as to his fate. He threatened to fight Kenton if he tried to break down the door.

That condition lasted for long hours. They did not wash any longer, because the water was running low.

"When it's gone," Norman asked at last, "what do we do? Just die of thirst? Look, Jimmy, something's happened—they've left, or we'd hear something. I'll go first, I'll stay in front of you. We've got to get out, and soon, for a lot of reasons—we're not eating, so we're getting weaker all the time. And we're going to run out of kerosene for the lamp. That can's almost empty."

Auberne said slowly, "We don't want to be left in the dark. We'd go nuts."

"Sure, we would."

They tested the door. They had nothing to work with, no tool except Norman's pocket knife. So they took turns with the small knife, chipping the solid wood around the metal plaque. Their fingers bled, their nails broke. They became so hungry that they had spells of weakness. The largest blade broke off, then another. They sat down and wept with frustration.

"WE'RE not making much headway," Norman declared. He sat and glared at the door. "If we had one good hunk of iron, we could pry it open. Or knock off the hinges." He looked at the forged iron pieces sullenly, then rose. "You damn fool!"

"O.K., be smart."

"You're so cocksure, I listened to you and didn't think myself. We can knock off those hinges. I don't know how much time we've wasted!" Norman stood on a chair and examined the top hinge. The pin had been tamped in. He flattened one of the tubes from the iron cots' framework at one end, to form a chisel, and tried to insert it between the hinge and the door. "We can dig under a bit with the knife and get it in—"

"Yeah, sure, and you'll get a nice bend in that pipe for your trouble."

"Well, we'll have to do something. What do you want to do, croak here?"

"We haven't much to say about it, *Captain*."

"There's a hundred ways to get through a door like that!"

"Sure," Auberne agreed, "and we could even dig a tunnel, or go through the brick wall. Only take maybe a year." He started to laugh sardonically. "And I could be home now, I got the points. But no, not me! I don't get killed in the war, so I got to get myself into this mess. Next time they have a war, somebody'll come down here and find our skeletons."

"I wish I had a cigarette," Norman said.

"Me, I wish I had a cigar, I'm no piker." Auberne looked at the door, cursed it a while, then kicked it hard. After that, he sat down beside the officer, grinned sadly. "We're in a mess for fair, kid. Just a door, just one little—" He stopped, staring at Norman, whose eyes were fixed on the door. "What's the matter—"

"Look at it, Jimmy, look at it!"

"O.K., I'm looking. You aren't going to blow your top?"

"I—I think it's open . . ."

"Take it easy, take it easy!"

"I tell you it's open a crack!" Norman rose and walked very slowly toward the door, as if it were watching him and might snap shut. The panel did seem to be an eighth of an inch from the jamb. It had been snug before. Cautiously, Norman pushed the little blade in the slit, worked it back and forth—and the door swung open.

Both of them now understood what had occurred. The door had been unlocked all the time. But, when working at it, they had forgotten it opened inward and had kept a shoulder or a hand against it. A few minutes' calm reflection at any time would have helped. Auberne's hard kick, in his fit of disgust, had jarred the panel loose.

"Well," Norman said, rising, "let's go."

"There's a note on the door," Auberne announced.

There was, inserted in one of the reinforcing iron bands. Norman leaned against the door, and said: "Bring the lamp closer, Jimmy." He was still fearful it would slam shut, even though it had no automatic locking device.

Auberne held the lamp while he read.

My dear Kent:

Do not be too angry with me for keeping you so long. I have given instructions that you be confined for a week, and then that the house be evacuated. I could not keep you, or your companion, indefinitely, and there was but one alternative. In justice to my comrades, I could not release you and endanger them. Neither could I bring myself to order you disposed of. You know why. Now, it would not matter if the police found the place. Nevertheless, I am asking a favor of you both. Carquille is too conspicuous to haul about. He will not know where we have gone, and can supply little information. Please do not mention him. It would serve no purpose and would get the poor fellow in trouble with the police who always take delight in torturing their betters. I believe you will be all right, as the Americans are looking for you and your friend. If you still have the desire to meet people who assisted you in the past, after this bitter lesson, go and see the worthy man whose name and address appear below, tell him I sent you and he will have you meet those among us who will run no danger through being known. Once more, a thousand regrets for all that has happened.

The note was signed simply *F*. Norman read the name and address several times to memorize it. "If it's O.K. with you, Jimmy, I'll burn this up. Carquille's name is on it and the cops may search us. No use getting him into trouble—"

"No, he wouldn't know a thing." Auberne shrugged. "Frederic's a pretty decent guy to think of him, though. Now, to get out of here and find some grub."

CHAPTER IV

THE MAKING OF A BANDIT

NORMAN had had the impression that he was in a cell in a vast subterranean dwelling. Probably the guards had marched them about to confuse them, for fifteen feet of corridor took them to an ordinary cellar, lined with empty kegs and barrels on cradles, and a flight of stairs emerging near the pantry.

A swift search convinced them that there was no food left in the house. But they drank fresh water from the tap until their bellies distended. The building was empty, obviously abandoned without thought of return.

The front of the house faced on a rather large garden, with vegetable and flower beds. The view was blanked out by a sizable structure of bricks, two stories high, evidently a factory. It was obviously unoccupied, all the unbroken windows opaque with dirt, the roof damaged. From the back windows, Norman, at last able to look over the top of the stone wall, saw nothing very startling—a rolling stretch of orchard, the slope of a grassy hill. There was a road nearby, and he could see telegraph poles.

Norman refused to go out as he was, dirty, dusty and bearded. He brushed his uniform, then went back to the cell to get the safety razor and the remaining sliver of soap.

Auberne grumbled over the delay, but did not act on the suggestion that he leave alone. "Say, how long do you suppose we were in there with the door open, Skipper?"

"Two-three days at least."

"Think we're far from town? Maybe you don't know it, but I'm hungry."

"We can't be far. Anyway, we'll find a farm or an inn. I got a few francs left in my pants pocket. Lucky you found your shoes, eh?"

"Wonder is they didn't swipe them. Say!" Auberne had peered over Norman's shoulder into the old-fashioned mirror above the sink. "I'm going to shave, too. People would set the dog on us the way I look."

"For the love of mike, Jimmy, let's get going!"

"I want to be pretty, too."

While he was shaving, Norman prowled about the house. On the floor near a chest was a small pile of copy-books, flanked by a ball of twine. Someone had obviously wished to take them, had changed his mind or been interrupted. Across the label pasted on the first one he read *Frederic Pierre Langlois-Bersilhon, 1932*. He opened the top book. The

writing was small, neat and firm, still boyish. *Histoire Rocambolesque des Bourgeois de Haut-Mouthiers.*

Norman forgot Auberne, whistling and splashing in the bathroom, as he read the opening of *The Fantastic History of the Haut-Mouthiers Middle-Class.*

> The spirit of the Haut-Mouthiers bourgeoisie was demonstrated recently by the donation of a stained-glass window to the ancient church of Saint Denis by Madame Alexandre Léricard, who amassed a fortune substituting lard for goose grease in the preparation of a famed comestible product guaranteed pure. The profits of several million petty thefts establishes a memorial to her virtues, generosity and piety. The ceremonies of acceptance, attended by a distinguished assembly of prelates, magistrates and wealthy citizens, went on undisturbed despite the ghostly squeals of the unfortunate hogs who had contributed the very best of themselves anonymously.

The young Frederic evidently had been well informed about the scandals, past and present, of his home town. It was a combination of Winchell and Rabutin. The text swarmed with such notes as:

> Suggestion to the P.G. that they add to their coat of arms the crossed oars, as their great-grandfather spent fifteen years in the King's galleys. Possibly with the motto *de stercore ennii.*

Frederic, then a candidate for baccalaureate of letters, had been very fond of inserting Latin, Greek and English tags.

> The purchase of a mansion by a well-known magistrate may have something to do with the one hundred and fifty thousand francs he found under his pillow after a restless night spent in deciding to revise a case in favor of the defendant. Indeed, as the British put it—*Time is money.*

Inside four pages, Norman found some very racy anecdotes on the private lives of two bourgeoises.

"O.K., all slicked up," Auberne said.

Norman gathered the copy-books, fastened them into a bundle with the string. Frederic was not likely to be back for them, and there was a chance he could entrust them to someone who could return them. The two skirted the deserted factory, which bore a peeling sign on the front side, *Antoine Heitmann, Choice Pottery.*

Not three hundred meters away, they found a place to eat. It was not really an inn, merely a farmhouse with a zinc bar, seven or eight bottles behind it, and two tables. The woman grumbled a bit, but consented to dish out cabbage soup, bread and cold meat. After much begging, she produced some cigarettes, American, of course, and Norman gave her his wristwatch to hold as security for their bill. They felt relaxed and heavy, reluctant to go forth and walk in the sun.

The woman sat down nearby, darning clothing. She chatted willingly. Yes, of course, she knew the Heitmann Factory and she'd known Heitmann. He'd lived there, with his wife and three kids, in a house behind the plant, for sixteen years, from '23 till '39, when he had suddenly left with his family. Then it had come out that he'd been a reserve captain in the

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"When I think of what those savages did to her, my blood boils—Oh-oh, it's bad luck to mention them, here they are."

Prussian Army. The Boches had not harmed anything there, had not even requisitioned the house for quarters. A German with an Alsatian wife had lived there throughout the Occupation, as a caretaker. The woman smiled. The Boches had trusted that couple, but in 1941 they had enrolled two sons into their army. One had been killed in Russia, and the other might be dead for all she knew. So they really hated the Boches, those two, and did them all the harm they could. Everybody who knew anything knew that, yet that had not prevented the dumb authorities from arresting the couple as enemy aliens a fortnight after the Boches had left!

"Ah, what a government we have, *monsieur!* Pray the good God you never get the like in America!"

"But, surely, General de Gaulle—"

"Oh, him? He's a brave and honest man, *monsieur*. But he is a soldier, poor soul, and *they* will drive him insane with their speeches and goings-on! There are people who fight and people who talk, and they're never the same. Take around here—my man risked his skin for four years in the Resistance, he killed Boches with his own hands. But the first thing the gendarmes did was pinch him for selling some liquor he made himself. A man of fifty-two! And when people come to town, you ought to see all the important fellows who rush forward, saying, 'Me, I resisted, me, I shot Boches.' That may be so, but I never saw them, and the bands would stop here for a drink and a bite often enough. And then, they started making trouble for that poor young Frederic, who did all the work and got us guns and ammunition, just because he killed some people who deserved it. They say now the gendarmes have him in jail somewhere and won't admit it."

"In jail?" Norman asked.

"Don't believe it, *monsieur*. He is too smart a bird for those boobs to catch. Just because he hasn't been around in a couple of weeks doesn't mean they have him." The woman held up her needle, squinted. "Know what I think? Well, he's going to kill off a few more before he's through. There's a lad, that one—the Boches offered half a million francs for him."

"You know him?"

"Everybody knows him. Some people are afraid to admit it, because the gendarmes come around and question people, even lock them up. But me, let them come. I'll tell them what I think. That's how I am, I'd talk with my head under the guillotine—"

Norman readily believed her.

"Did you know Madame Emilie?" Norman wondered.

"Did I know her, the poor darling? Since she was that high. When I think of what those savages did to her, my blood boils—Oh-oh, it's bad luck to mention them, here they are!"

They were gendarmes, two of them, and Norman uneasily identified them as the pair he had met. The older, the sergeant, stared at him incredulously, from the doorway, they came to attention and saluted.

"Captain Kenton, Norman Kenton?"

"Yes," Norman admitted, rising.

"You can brag that you worried us, *mon capitaine!* The mayor, the prefect, the commander of the gendarmerie, all yelled at us. No, don't disturb yourself. My comrade and I will ride back to town and inform the Americans. They will send a car for you at once." The cop looked at Auberne. "I've seen you before, haven't I? Show your papers!"

"I lost them."

"Then you must come with us immediately!"

"Monsieur is an American, and with me," Norman said, doubtfully. But the complexion of things had changed. The gendarme smiled, his comrade beamed.

"Ah, if *Monsieur le capitaine* assumes the responsibility, there is nothing to say." He saluted, exchanged glares with the woman and was off. Norman looked at Auberne and grinned.

"Don't worry, Jimmy. You're with me."

"Nuts!" Auberne retorted.

THE American officers at the base in Haut-Mouthiers proved very friendly and helpful. Norman was in the clear, as his papers and bag had been recovered when Jake and his helper were arrested.

For two days, Norman was questioned by both the French and the American authorities. For long hours he was up to his neck in nervous majors fresh from Paris, in magistrates, in gendarmes. O'Byrne was subjected to a similar ordeal.

In any case, the atmosphere in town was very tense. The trial of Resseguier de Bersilhon, chief of the Sodac, the arch-collaborator according to the authorities, just another guy who had tried to get by without trouble to many, was continuing at a snail's pace. The population was proud that they had an important trial, just like Paris. Feelings were high, there were arguments in cafés, on the streets, even fights. At night, detonations would slap out as de Gaullists and Vichyites sought direct action.

Norman then obtained an extension of leave, helped by the local American commander, and even got the use of a jeep. For several days, he had a wonderful time, knocking about the countryside. At the address given him by Frederic, an old gentleman gave him needed information to retrace that journey through the dark of two years before. Once out of the immediate vicinity of Haut-Mouthiers, he was greeted with enthusiasm, treated to drinks from unburied bottles of *fine,* he was remembered and beloved.

Once in a while, he met someone who knew Frederic and was willing to talk about him. Norman noticed that while all officialdom was against the man, practically all members of the Resistance in the rural stretches admired him and wished him well.

By the time he returned to Haut-Mouthiers, O'Byrne had gone back to Paris. Norman had grown to like him, but he had become accustomed to losing friends and he did not brood long. He had a fine room, on the second floor of the largest hotel, on the Place Gambetta, and from the balcony he could observe the town scenes. He was separated from the Palace of Justice, where the trial was continuing, only by space and the horse-chestnut trees. There was a marked display of force, not merely uniformed police and gendarmes, but obviously disguised spies.

"They're scared of Frederic, the lot of them," explained the talkative floor waiter.

"Why?" Norman wondered.

"Well, to start with, Bersilhon's his grandfather, then there are people inside he's sworn to croak." The waiter, a long, lean man with sad eyes, shrugged. "I don't know all the ins and outs, *monsieur,* because I have been back only a few weeks. I returned in June from Germany. But I tell you frankly, if I had the youth and the guts, I would help Frederic."

Norman attended a session of the trial and was very bored. The crowded room, the steady flow of talk, the fake indignation of lawyers and magistrates, annoyed him. Resseguier was tall, thin, distinguished, wore miniature decorations on his lapel. He rose and spoke only once that day, in a firm, slightly ironic tone.

"It is understood by everyone here that I am to blame for the national defeat. Why trouble to prove my deeds when my opinions alone condemn me?" He smiled, his wrinkled, smooth-shaven face as bland as a stage butler's. "And then shoot my relative for going to the other extreme!"

Maître Mongeon, Resseguier's attorney, summoned Norman to his office. Mongeon was in the fifties, a round-bellied, sleek man with a certain resemblance to Louis XVI. He was interested in the arrest of Frederic Langlois, he said, because of the relationship with his client. He explained the connection, but vaguely, and Norman thought he wanted the arrest to serve as a red herring for the populace.

"You need feel no qualms, Captain. Your testimony will not be needed at the actual trial. And you owe no loyalty to Frederic—he was acting on orders. As often occurs, he could not adapt himself to peace conditions, was reluctant to yield his powers, could no longer distinguish between his own interests and impulses and patriotic duties."

"I assure you I know nothing," Norman replied tightly, "but if I did, I probably would not help you. Not only did he save my life two years ago, but he recently spared a friend of mine, putting himself to considerable inconvenience to avoid harming him."

"He did not wish to add the Americans to his enemies."

"He is to be executed in any case, so what did he have to lose?" Norman shrugged. "I have told you all I know. In my turn may I ask you a question? Thanks. Do you know what became of a young woman I—saw with Frederic, years ago? Emilie?"

"I knew the person you mean, yes." The lawyer wiped his pince-nez, held the lenses to the light. "She died in December 1943. She was arrested by the Gestapo, for questioning. Her death was reported three days later, as caused

by heart failure. To anyone familiar with the methods of the Occupants' secret police, the euphemism is patent. Yes, I knew her well, knew her since childhood. Frederic was a most disturbing and nefarious influence on her. But for him, I am sure, she would be alive and happy today."

"I understand," Norman said, rising, ready to take his leave.

"One moment!" The lawyer waved him back into the easy-chair. "I'll be open with you, Captain Kenton. I need Frederic Langlois because, in his capacity as Resistance chief here, he learned many things about many people. He must have seen lists of informers to the German Police during the Occupation—they were collated by many and given to the British Intelligence who, in turn, informed those directly interested. I have an idea certain jurors—there would be no need for me to see Frederic—he can see the list of jurors in the papers and may remember . . ."

"I see." Norman rose again, smiled. "Good day."

He walked across the square to his hotel. What the lawyer wanted was information to bring secret pressure on the jurors. One newspaper had mentioned the fact that trying a man of Resseguier's importance in a town the size of Haut-Mouthiers, it was impossible to find a score of men who were intelligent enough to serve, yet had had no acquaintance with the accused man. Business, social and family connections had been traced to several jurors. But neither side had objected; the articles of the code covering the selection of jurors had been technically conformed with, and the trial was proceeding according to schedule.

The conversation with Mongeon had reminded Norman of something—the copy-books he had picked up in the deserted house. He found them undisturbed on the top shelf of the closet. There were quite a few of them—a good afternoon's reading.

He sorted the copy-books according to dates, and they formed two sets—one starting in 1932 and ending in 1934, one set written in 1945. At the end of the book ending in '34, a sort of dedication explained much: *June 1937—to my wife Emilie. May you see in these puerile pages the tormenting love of justice I felt, and know the joy of my discovering a being all love and all truth.*

The last set, written in terser style, without Latin quotes, opened thus:

> Notes for the edification of the student of this turbulent period. A biography done in my former style in memory of one who will never read it. Of politics and Boches, of families and marriage, or: How one becomes a bandit.

Norman read that first.

CHAPTER V

PERSONAL HISTORY

I WAS born in 1916. On the very day of my birth, my father, Pierre-Louis Langlois, was wounded by a shell splinter before a dressing-station near Verdun. It was his second wound, and won him the rosette of the Legion of Honor.

It is necessary to explain who and what my father was. He had been born on a farm, somewhere in the east, around Pontarlier, and only great ambition and perseverance had enabled him to become a physician. He was a handsome man, tall, with no trace, at the time he came to Haut-Mouthiers, of his peasant background. He succeeded very quickly and became, what would be called in a larger sphere, a society doctor. It was thus that he met my mother, fell in love, was loved in return and married her, over the initial objections of my grandfather. The marriage, of course, did not hurt his career. He met the right people, those who carry nuggets of gold in their abdomens in the shape of viciated organs. In 1914, he was rich for a man his age, lived in a large house on the best street, and owned two automobiles.

He recovered from his wound, served as a military surgeon until the end of the war, returned home in 1919. But he was a changed man. He had shaved his beard, the professional beard, and he had lost his ambition. For years I believed that he had gone insane, because of the head wound. That was the story told me by my mother and, after her death, by my grandfather, whom I worshiped.

For my parents separated in 1921, my mother returning to her family. There was no thought of a divorce. Divorce was considered a sport for the newly rich. As I grew up, I saw my father from time to time. As a small boy, I was afraid of him, did not like him. He was careless about his dress, his suits were wrinkled, his hat battered, his shoes unpolished. He smoked small, smelly cigars and his lap and vest were whitened by ashes. His hands were cool with a queer, faint odor, an odor that clung to his clothes. And, more than once, his breath smelled of brandy. Not in a discreet, gentle fashion, as my grandfather's after a good dinner, but violently. It is admitted generally that my father drank too much.

Also, he was reputed in my surroundings, to be an anarchist. He supported the wrong candidates at elections, even made speeches. In fact, it was a speech in support of a leftist candidate that had led to the break with my mother and her family. In 1926, there was an effort made by the local physicians to revoke his license. He was called an eccentric, a madman, and his colleagues tactfully referred to his head wound. I was attending the *lycée*

then, and my comrades did not spare me the details. I was ashamed of my father. Two years later, he died. I attended the funeral, and walked behind his hearse, holding on to my grandfather's hand. Death had made up differences.

My grandfather explained to me, after telling me that I was twelve, and therefore enough of a man to understand, that my father had been shot and killed in a drunken brawl. I received as my very own a box containing his war decorations, two cigar-holders, and an old-fashioned gold watch, and was transferred to a *lycée* in Paris. I spent summer vacations with my grandfather in Switzerland, Brittany or Italy. The only time I spent in Haut-Mouthiers was around the Christmas and New Year holidays.

I was sixteen when I met Emilie at a tennis match. Her father approved of me. My grandfather smiled and said I would have many changes of heart before the question became serious. He was wrong—in that as in many things.

The crowd I moved in had begun to amuse me, and I wrote a history of Haut-Mouthiers. While at home, convalescing from an illness, I wandered about the lower part of town, near the river. I was tall, and looked four or five years older than my real age. Once, in a café, I got into a row and was knocked down. In one way or another, my name was pronounced and, to my amazement, everyone there became friendly.

"He's the doctor's boy," they said, as if that mattered.

And my father had been dead for five years. I was told that he had been the best physician and the kindest man in the world; that the reason the other doctors had tried to revoke his license was because he was a friend of the poor, and treated most of his patients for nothing. He had said he did not need money—he could drop in anywhere and be asked to supper.

He had drunk a lot, that was true, but he had not been a drunkard. He had not been killed in a drunken brawl, either. A workman, in an alcoholic seizure, had battered his wife, his children, and injured a gendarme. Then he had barricaded himself in his house and threatened to kill anyone who came to arrest him. He had wounded two more policemen with a shotgun before Dr. Langlois heard about it and rushed over. My father went straight for the house, shouting to the man inside that he was being a fool, coaxing him to open the door and surrender.

He had convinced the maniac, but had been unable to control the cops. When the man appeared, shots were fired. The maniac had been severely hurt, and they picked up my father with a bullet in his skull. Only one local paper had given the whole story, and I found it. Instead of being someone to be ashamed of, my father became an idol.

I left school and quit my grandfather's home. But I was under age, and he could force his will, as my legal guardian. He loved me, however. I kept running away from school until he tired of that. In a melodramatic interview, I gave his choice between having me commit a felony, thereby dishonoring his name, or giving me permission to enlist in the army. I did not want to eat his food or live under his roof. At eighteen, one has much pride and very little sense. He signed, and I enlisted in the Air Army. I was a sergeant inside eighteen months, and was discharged with that rank at the end of three years.

I had served an apprenticeship, knew a trade. I went back to Haut-Mouthiers and informed my grandfather that I would marry Emilie. I told him that I could support her, and added that her father approved of the match. My grandfather said he did not, and was not worried about the girl's father at all—he knew what the man was after. To prove it, he sent for him and informed him that if his daughter married me, she would have to live on a mechanic's wages, as he would immediately cut me off.

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"Oh," her father said, "in that case, I no longer approve."

I could not marry without my guardian's consent until I reached twenty-five. Emilie was seventeen, had even longer to wait. Young people do not like waiting. We decided to elope, face our people with an accomplished fact, and see what would happen. I had a job in a machine shop in Paris. She joined me there, and everything seemed settled. But her father called in the police, and one morning the cops crashed into our lodgings in a cheap boarding house. It was a very sordid trick, and I haven't loved her father very much since. She was taken away from me, but I was released from prison in a few days, as charges were dropped: a trial would have meant publicity.

We managed to exchange letters, although she was virtually a prisoner in her father's house. From time to time, my grandfather wrote or came to see me at the shop, asking me to forget my foolishness and return. But I told him I was merely waiting until I was twenty-five.

TWO years later, the war broke out. I was young and welcomed it. I was a machine-gunner on an Amiot machine, and participated in several engagements during the phony war. After the debacle, in 1940, I escaped to England and served with the French there and for a few months in Egypt. In the spring of 1942, ranking as a sub-lieutenant in de Gaulle's Fighting French Forces, I was recalled to London. I had a good many interviews with both French and British officials, and was given an assignment. I was dropped by parachute as a secret agent of the Allies in the region I knew so well. With me was an Englishman by the name of Lewis-Waterford. I believe he is still alive. Together, we contacted the existing organization and whipped it into efficiency.

It was at that time that I found out that Emilie was married. I was deeply shocked, but not vengeful. It was several months before I saw her, and then it was more or less in the line of duty. Some woman told me there was room in a house right in the center of town in which to hide fugitives. The man who owned it only occupied two rooms on the ground floor, as he was separated from his wife, who lived with her father. The wife, a patriot, would be willing to meet me, give me the information, the keys. The wife turned out to be Emilie.

She had believed me dead. In fact, my death had been reported in the local paper. Her father had insisted that she get married, because some gossip had started about her trip to Paris. He had the man for her, his chief clerk, who had inherited some money to put into his hardware business. Emilie finally consented, thinking it would merely be a marriage of convenience, since the man seemed chiefly interested in becoming her father's partner. He was a quiet, mousy man of forty-four. But there had been quarrels later, bitter quarrels. They were still going on, those quarrels. Her father was urging her to live with her husband—things did not look right with them separated—the man might become angry and take his money elsewhere.

I took her away. It was ironical that though I was of age, I was baffled in a new sort of way. I had no legal existence, could not intervene openly. At the time, I also was reluctant to use the power given me by the military situation to further my personal ends. I could have notified the father and the husband that any denunciation would mean their death. I am sorry I did not. Emilie had left notes, they knew she had not left unwillingly. But they went to the authorities and reported that Emilie had been kidnaped. Of course, before long, the authorities knew just what had happened and left me alone. In fact, they spread the rumor that she had been picked up and secreted by the Gestapo, an all too common occurrence at the time.

The Gestapo had a new chief, very clever and energetic, by the name of Breittweller. He knew the region and he knew French character. He maintained rigid regulations, but played the kind, Frenchified German—made this exception and that, gave passes generously, freed relatives of weeping women, explaining how sorry he was about the whole business. He made friends and grew very dangerous. A woman whose man was arrested knew she had a chance to free him if she had information to give in exchange. Also, Breittweller knew that in France the poor are disinterested and the prosperous are often greedy. Rewards must be sized to tempt important people, not farmers and tramps. Inside a fortnight, he knew my exact identity, and casually offered a half million francs for me.

That is serious money. It interested the small businessmen, who had been beyond the temptation of five or ten thousand francs. Absolute secrecy was guaranteed to the informer, remember. I could feel the net tightening around me and felt that if I allowed Breittweller to go on for much longer, he would get me. Lewis, on one of his visits, agreed with me, and we decided to remove him. That was not as easy as it sounds. He was well-guarded, and went about in an armored car.

We did it this way, after long planning. Breittweller had just returned from a visit to Paris, and was driving from the railway station to his headquarters in a limousine we knew was plated with steel and fitted with bullet-proof glass. Moreover, he had a motorcycle escort and storm troopers patrolled the streets. We figured that the place they least expected trouble was at the bridge across the river; they

had guards at each end and the span was open to observation on all sides.

One of our chaps, an agile young fellow, got the signal that the procession was coming and started over the bridge. He looked like what he was, a workman. The guards waved him on casually enough. When the Gestapo car rolled by, he threw the greasy, paper-wrapped bundle he carried, which looked like a lunch. Then he leaped over the rail.

The package held a small bomb, which made a very loud explosion and a lot of smoke, but did little damage even to the tires. Nevertheless, the chauffeur stopped. Guards and soldiers raced to the center of the bridge from both sides; some of them straddled the rail, hung far out, looking at the inside of the arches. They knew the culprit was somewhere near. Briettweller then did what we expected him to do, what almost anyone would have done. He left the protection of the car, never expecting that another attempt on his life was scheduled so soon after the supposed failure. He was, of course, curious to see the shooting match which would start when the fugitive was spotted and tried to swim for his life.

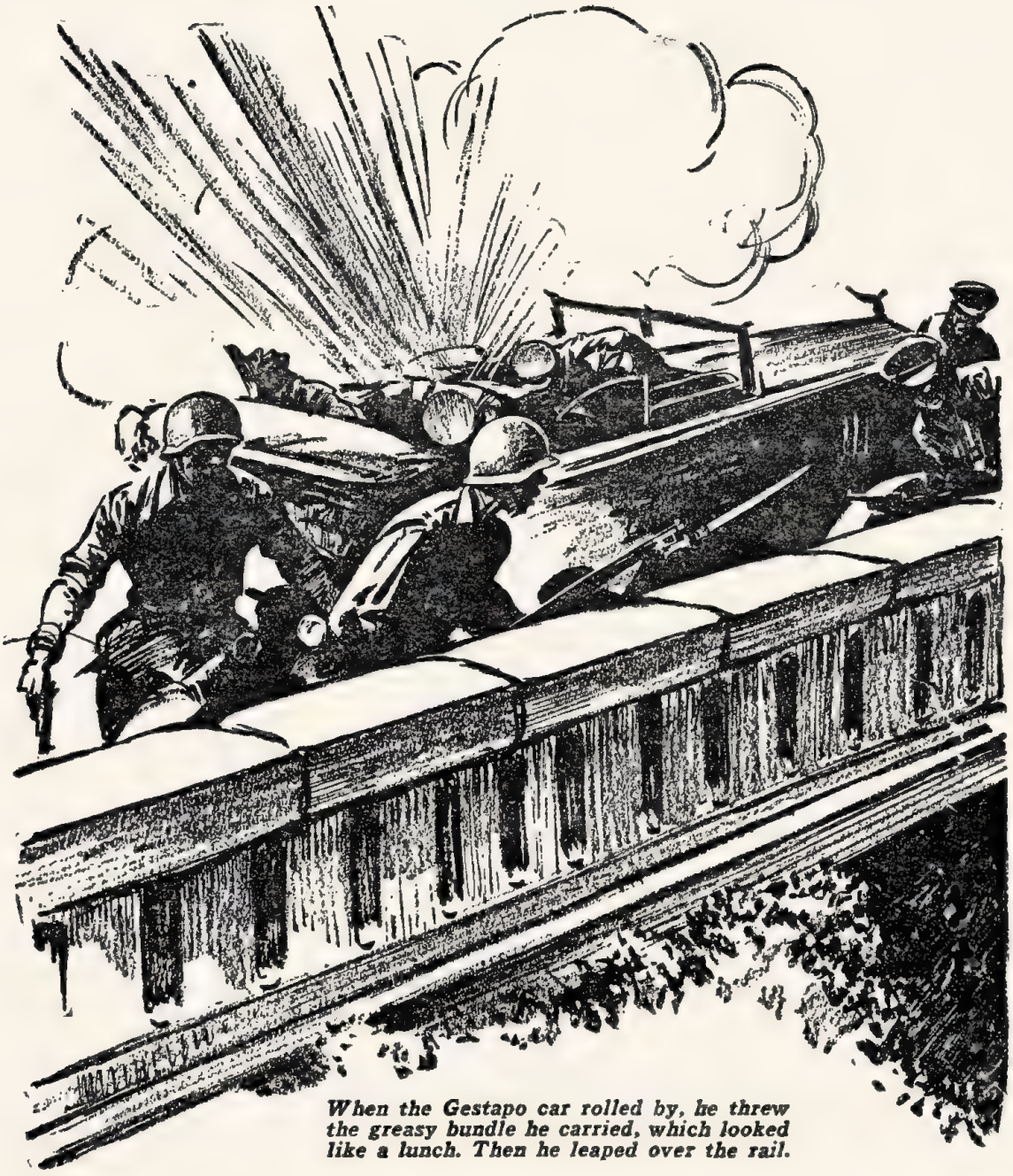
I was within one hundred and sixty meters of him, standing in a urinal on Joffre Avenue, behind a breast-high metal screen. I reached under the trough, where a sporting rifle with telescope sights had been hidden for me. Everyone was looking at the center of the bridge. I aimed and fired, then shoved the gun back out of sight, and walked away.

I learned later that the men close to Briettweller did not immediately realize that he had been shot. He collapsed on the rail, his peaked cap fell in the river, and they thought he had fainted—until they saw the hole torn in his neck. He died two hours later. As we had expected, the whole Gestapo fanned into the nearest streets, and the bomb thrower escaped by a method we may have to use again.

As I said, both of us were safe. But a ghastly thing happened. The Germans arrested two or three hundred people in the vicinity of the attack, shot fifty that very day and fifty the following morning.

I confess that I wanted to quit, to go back to London, to ask for a combat assignment. But the Englishman pointed out to me that artillerymen, aviators, were in the same plight as I was. Their shells and their bombs often killed Frenchmen. Part of the game, he said. And he was right.

THE new Gestapo chief was the ordinary type, more brutal than Briettweller had been, much less dangerous to us. I had established my headquarters in a house kept by people whom the Boches trusted. It also



When the Gestapo car rolled by, he threw the greasy bundle he carried, which looked like a lunch. Then he leaped over the rail.

served as a hospital for sick or wounded fugitives. Emilie had had training with the Dames de France and made an excellent nurse. In spite of the constant danger, we were happy.

Most of the town policemen and several gendarmes were friendly to us. It is silly to speak of membership or non-membership. We knew the people who would help in a pinch and those who wouldn't. Save for a small nucleus of twenty or twenty-five men, we had no permanent force. But we had guns enough to arm several scores in an emergency, and men designated to take command at various spots.

We received our information and warnings by various means. Sometimes by telephone. Sometimes by messengers. Sometimes by signals with wash hanging on a line, or a curtain drawn over a window. More than once, I received messages from Haut-Mouthiers, but an hour and a half's walk away, transmitted through London by radio.

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My striking force, what I called my Old Guard, was composed of boys averaging under eighteen, most of them deserters from Petain's camps of the *Cadres de la Jeunesse*, the French version of the German youth organization. I did not even attempt to teach them simple army formations, but concentrated on efficiency. In night combat, I have seen them rout five times their number of Boches, veterans of Poland, France, the Balkans, Russia. They were gun-crazy and, I am glad to say, happy. I fear that a good many of them, now in uniform with regular formations, find ordinary warfare tedious.

We had a number of physicians we could call upon. However, only one did I trust sufficiently to enter my hide-out. He had known my father in his youth, and told me that he had admired him at the time, and been indignant at the persecutions inflicted on him. Now, he informed me, he was not so sure—a physician had no business mixing in politics and social matters other than hygiene. Non-conformists, he added, had to pay the price.

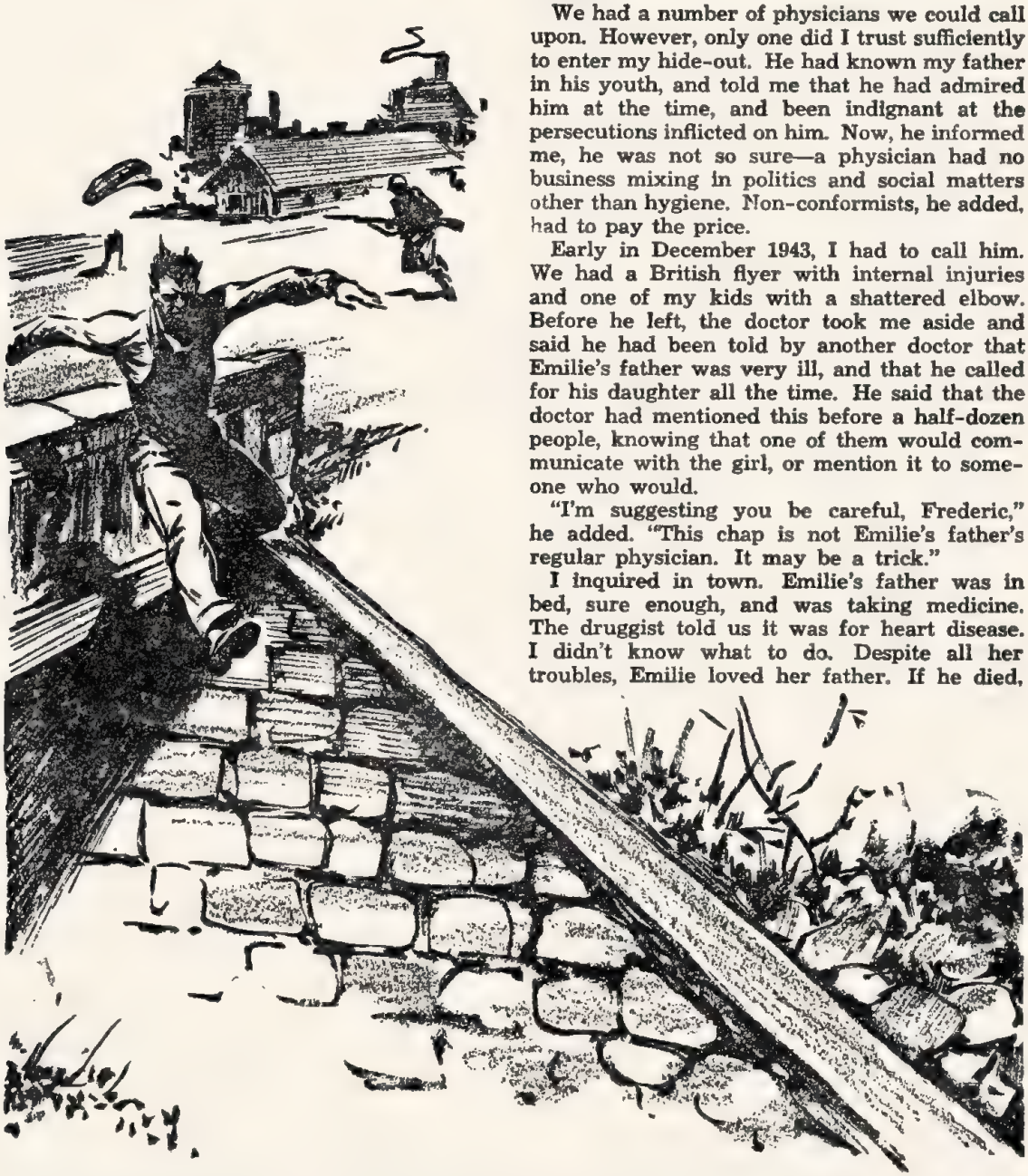
Early in December 1943, I had to call him. We had a British flyer with internal injuries and one of my kids with a shattered elbow. Before he left, the doctor took me aside and said he had been told by another doctor that Emilie's father was very ill, and that he called for his daughter all the time. He said that the doctor had mentioned this before a half-dozen people, knowing that one of them would communicate with the girl, or mention it to someone who would.

"I'm suggesting you be careful, Frederic," he added. "This chap is not Emilie's father's regular physician. It may be a trick."

I inquired in town. Emilie's father was in bed, sure enough, and was taking medicine. The druggist told us it was for heart disease. I didn't know what to do. Despite all her troubles, Emilie loved her father. If he died, and she discovered I had known he was very ill, she would be angry.

At last, I told her. She insisted upon going that very night. She laughed when I mentioned our doctor thought it might be a trick. It was no trouble at all to get her to her father's house, for we knew the schedule of the patrols and had observers everywhere. She would be back the following nighi, or send word. I never saw her again, she never wrote me.

She reached her father's bed. But she had



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She reached her father's bed. But she had

not been there an hour when her husband appeared, with a commissioner of police and an agent in plain clothes. She was given her choice between going back to her husband's domicile—where she had never lived—and arrest. Her husband charged that she had disposed of certain bonds without his permission among other things too vile to mention. Emilie was taken to the police station, for further investigation. She had not been there an hour before the Germans came for her.

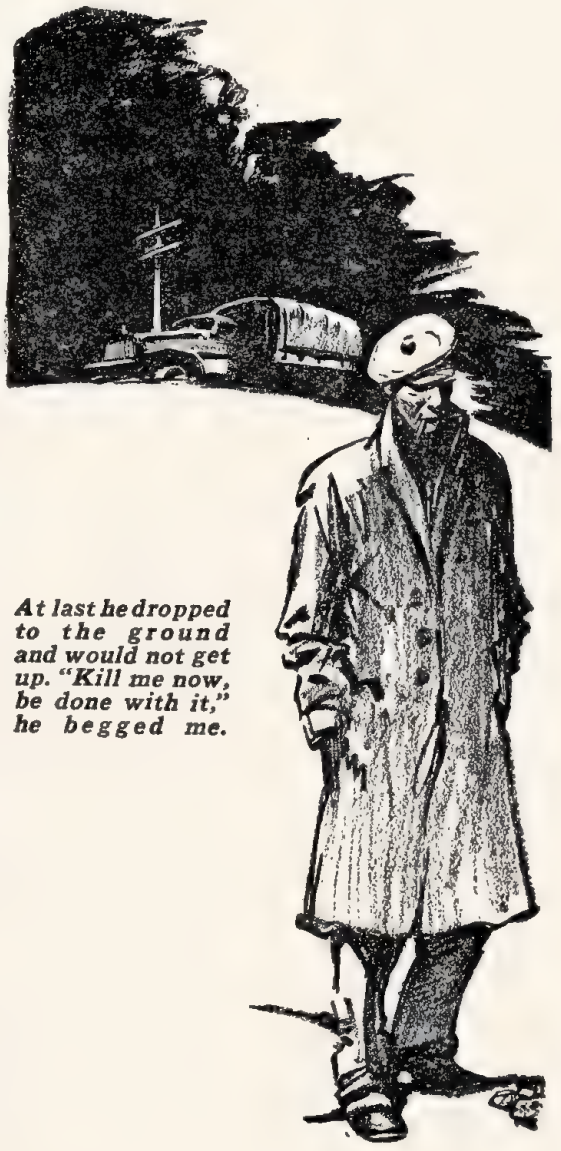
Four men took part in the questioning. I heard a few details from them, as I subsequently met all of them, and not by accident. I have thought and thought of the details until I scarcely can feel any emotion. Emilie looked delicate, but she evidently had strength. She was in very bad shape at the end of the first night. But she had not talked. She was questioned again the next afternoon, and one slight detail will reveal much—she could not dress herself, as her hands were injured, and had to have the assistance of a matron. It seems that strong measures were undertaken: she was given shocks through electrodes inserted in her body. Then, the report concludes, she succumbed to stoppage of the heart. Without talking. Her body was buried in a common grave with fifteen or sixteen other victims. And her husband was duly notified.

He left town for a while, and I learned about Emilie's death from one of our informers. I ascertained, very carefully, the names of the Boches who had been on duty. I got one, then another, then a third—several days apart. I questioned them for a few hours, and then they died of stoppage of the heart.

The fourth must have realized there was some connection between the disappearance of his friends and one particular questioning, for he obtained a transfer. I located him inside a fortnight and made a trip into the Department of the Vosges. By a coincidence, he died two days after my arrival.

There remained the husband. But the husband was not a German, he was French. So far as I could find out, he had not collaborated with the enemy. He had committed no crime against France, in fact he had committed no legal crime whatever. He had called in the French police to enforce his rights as a husband. He had every right to do that. Every right legally, that is. Perhaps he had not even known how closely the Gestapo checked on the arrests made by the French police. Perhaps he had been merely a jealous, humiliated man.

Nevertheless, he had caused Emilie's horrible suffering and her death. I decided to kill him, although I realized that in killing him I would be taking a life in my private capacity and not as a representative of the French Resistance. And I rationlized it this way: "I've killed many for France, I can kill one for me."



At last he dropped to the ground and would not get up. "Kill me now, be done with it," he begged me.

HE REMAINED away for weeks. Obviously, he felt uneasy about returning until the resentment over Emilie's death had died down. Then at that time the Boches poured a lot of raw troops into France. They needed their best elements in Tunisia, in Italy, and the new bunch was made up of disparate races, battalions and squadrons of foreigners. This made a nice display of strength, but really proved weaker than the less numerous but more loyal and efficient groups that had preceded them.

But the husband was deceived into thinking that with more soldiers everywhere, the resistance would be hampered, crushed. He came back for a flying visit, to settle his affairs. He

was cautious, and I did not learn of his return until he had been in town several hours. I played with him. I allowed him to settle this and that. The days passed and he became a little bolder. He was even seen eating in a public restaurant. I let him finish his deals, even allowed him to board the night train south.

The train was blacked out, because of possible air raids, and when it made a brief stop before crossing a bridge often damaged by our saboteurs, two of my men quietly pulled him out. We led him some distance away, and I ordered him to take off his shoes. He did. He was so scared I could hear his teeth rattle.

He was a city man, and we made him walk across country barefooted. He did not like it. He groaned and he fell, and before long, he was begging. There was snow on the ground here and there, to cool his feet. At last he dropped and would not get up. "Kill me now, be done with it—"

"You've got forty-eight hours coming to you," I said.

"I'll yell—"

The others had picked him up, and I could see the evil shining around his head like the devil's halo even in the darkness. I hit him, and I felt his teeth yield and crack. I felt no pity, just an immense satisfaction that spilled through me like sunshine. He fell down, but we revived him, and made him walk. He stumbled along, and when he took it too easy and sulked, one of my chaps would jab him in the small of the back with a knife.

But he fooled us in the end, and remained unconscious despite all we could do. So we had to carry him, and he wasn't a light burden. The others tired in time and wanted to finish him,

but I was not through. We got him to the house at last, once more on his own feet—or what was left of his feet. I took him down in the cellar, and chained him to the wall. He complained about his feet, said they were mangled and frozen, that he would lose them. I poured iodine over them, to prevent infection. He did not like that.

"You're Langlois, aren't you?" he said. "Why don't you kill me and be done with it?"

"We haven't started yet," I told him. I took

a slip of paper out of my wallet, consulted it—notes I had made while the Gestapo men were chatting with me. "This is the menu, what they did to Emilie. You've already lost some teeth, but the eye is behind schedule." I struck him on the left eye. After that I read him what he had to expect.

"It wasn't my fault," he protested when he could talk. "All I did was demand my rights. She was my wife and she did sell bonds without my permission."

"Her own bonds—"

"Part of her dowry. I'd put seven hundred thousand francs into her old man's business; the money was really mine." He wept tears from one eye and blood from the other. "Please kill me, please."

"Do you mistake me for a murderer, old chap? They did not kill her outright, they questioned her. Hold out your hand like a nice fellow. Come on, that's on the program—"

He made quite a fuss about it at first, and somebody had to hold him. After an hour and a half, his face seemed to have grown lean, the flesh to have slipped beneath his chin. You had to handle him like a rag-doll; he didn't even struggle.

"At this point," I informed him, "they granted her a rest. Allowed her to rinse her mouth with water." I handed him a mug. "And then they gave her a small glass of brandy. Would you care for a spot?"

"Oh, yes, thank you," he mumbled.

That "thank you" almost broke us down. It was horrible in its sincerity. The man was actually grateful to us! But for that paper in my hand, enumerating the tortures to which Emilie had been subjected, I'd have quit right then. But I looked at my watch, and after waiting fifteen minutes, gave the signal to my men to resume.

Emilie must have been of steel, for that man fainted two or three times out of schedule. Even when he was conscious, he did not react much. We suffered ourselves at the idea that we were committed to continue this bestiality for hours. You need a special mentality for that kind of work. We came to another rest period, during which he was allowed another drink of brandy.

"I wasn't doing it for money," he said after a while. "All I wanted was to get her back. I was humiliated. People knew she had run away and laughed behind my back. I swear I didn't ask for a sou."

"A sou of what?" I asked him.

"Of the five hundred thousand reward for you."

"I don't get you, man. What did that reward have to do with—"

"You don't know?" a startling expression of craftiness showed even on those battered features. "You don't know?" He even laughed. "I'll tell you, but I want another drink, a big drink. And—" he broke into sobs— "you must finish it soon, soon. I have something to tell you, I have—Look, if you didn't know, you'll be amazed . . . Look, I'll take a chance and tell you anyway, and if—if you think it's worth while, you make it easy, eh, you make it easy, Frederic?"

I gave him half a tumbler of brandy then. I promised him nothing. And he started to talk, talk himself into a quicker death. He knew we could not let him go.

"It was her father's idea," he said. "The whole thing, from beginning to end. I don't say that he thought the Boches would keep after her until she died. He thought she'd break and tell them where you were; they'd jail her a while, then let her out after you were caught and shot. He had made a bargain with Breittweller, and knew that his successor would play along, he said. He didn't trust his own physician, so he picked another. He was supposed to have a stroke. Have you seen him since? Does he look like a sick man?"

I had seen Emilie's father, from a distance, on several occasions. He looked healthy enough. I was a fool and had not wondered at his recovery, because I had not thought it possible that a man would betray his own child. Our doctor had guessed correctly all right.

"I loved her, I wanted her back. He, the old crook, told me he would have her brought back, as soon as possible. He needed five hundred thousand francs. I didn't want any of it—all I wanted was for her to come back, to give me a chance. In her name, for her sake, pity me."

I asked him to repeat the story, and wrote it down. He had a little trouble signing, but finally managed it.

"You going to skip the rest?" he asked.

"It's all over," I told him, and saw hope welling in his eyes. I kidded him along. "Look, you're not permanently injured. A good dentist and a doctor can fix you up, if you promise not to squeal . . . You do? Fine." We helped him into another room, laid him on a cot. "You'll be all right. You suffering much?"

"Quite a lot, but it's all right, Frederic. I had it coming."

"I'll give you an injection of morphine so you can sleep," I said, taking out the kit. "The doc will be here in the morning. There—felt that much?"

"That little prick?" He smiled with ineffable irony. "Quit kidding."

He fell asleep with a smile—and never woke up.

OF COURSE, my first impulse was to go straight to the father's house. He lived on the Avenue Félix Fauré, Number 48, above the two floors occupied by his offices. But it was almost dawn—the husband had lasted the

night—and I could not do the job alone. I had to find out who slept in the place, how to get in and out. We called the next evening, but he was gone. He had undoubtedly asked his son-in-law to telephone him the following morning. When the call did not come, he knew something had happened.

Of course, I did not change my resolution to kill him. I found out that he had gone to Switzerland. I could have had him polished off there, but I wanted to do the job in person. And I could not leave my work with the Resistance at that time.

We had several gendarmes connected with our bunch, and I saw them often. They were fond of kidding me about my being a common-law murderer, and laughed at the whole business. Human life was cheap—the Boches would shoot a score of hostages without the least hesitation, French workmen were killed by allied bombs almost every day. There was a war, and with thousands of healthy young guys getting it, nobody really fretted about one fat slob more or less.

When the Americans came, my men had cleared most of the town of Boches, collaborators and militiamen. It was a splendid autumn when my chaps paraded openly in the square. I shook hands with a couple of generals, the Mayor congratulated me. For a week, I was a hero. Then, at my own request, I was assigned to my old service—aviation. Since long strides had been made during the time I had been in the Resistance, I was to go to the United States for fresh training. I had been awarded, of course, the Cross of Liberation. Lewis came through and we had a reunion—he was in uniform, a major. He wanted me to go with him, attached to his country's Intelligence. I refused, but I was flattered. I was someone important, respectable. I still thought of Emilie's father, but I was beginning to waver.

Then I was arrested by gendarmes, in the dining room of the Grand Hotel and taken to a police station. The commissary informed me that I was charged with murder. They stuck me in a cell, taking away my shoe laces, suspenders and necktie, fearing I might commit suicide.

I found out that if I was popular in some quarters, I was not in others. I had killed or ordered killed a number of persons in the months I had been in charge, and the dead had left relatives, who condoned the faults and treason of the departed and viewed me as an assassin.

Very soon, I saw that there was a tendency to rush things a bit, that any trial would be short and sweet, ending with me before a firing squad. Some of my chaps had got in touch

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FOR QUICK RELIEF FROM
Tired Achy Muscles • Sprains • Stiff Joints • Strains • Bruises
What you NEED is SLOAN'S LINIMENT

with me—we had had long experience communicating with prisoners—and suggested that they free me. I refused, at first. Then I got a tip from a very sure source that I was soon to be added to a batch of sentenced men, taken out and shot without further fuss! So I agreed to escape. I was out in five hours.

I still thought I could get a hearing later, believed that men who had lived and suffered during the Occupation would understand what I had done. But the authorities arrested two persons they thought connected with my escape, and although I had been arrested as a common-law criminal, they applied military law to them—shot them out of hand, alined with a few fascist snipers. Both were chaps who would have been decorated for bravery in any army; both were shot for being loyal to a chief they had followed for years.

The official who signed the order was later found hung up by an ankle from the chandelier in his parlor, his head riddled. There was an order from Paris that partisans, Maquisards, resistants, whatever name you choose, were to turn in their weapons, but our weapons were our pride; we had used them to help clean out the Boches. Moreover one saw men in nondescript uniforms, whom we remembered as members of various organizations such as Pétain's Veteran Legion, carrying rifles.

There were a few Communists among us, and they had proved fine fellows. So the conservative elements called us Communists, and the radicals called us Fascists. We soon remained but a score, as I urged the young chaps to leave us and conform with the laws. Almost every one of us left behind had some common-law charge against his name. Not to mince words, we were bandits.

Gendarmes and policemen hunted us. We understood that they were obeying their orders, that some of them were in sympathy with us. But a little shedding of blood will do strange things to understanding. For instance, the young fellow who had tossed a bomb at Gestapo Leader Breittweller and escaped via the river was badly wounded in a skirmish with police agents, pursued like a wild animal through the woods, beaten, kicked to death. I took vengeance, and knew then that it would mean the firing squad or the guillotine.

People were punished for helping us. The farmers had helped us willingly before, but grew afraid. We knew that many of them had become rich out of the war while we, who had taken risks, emerged poor and outcasts. They could afford to feed us. When they refused, we insisted strongly. Each such incident became a robbery according to common law, complicated by violence and one or two homicides.

We found out that much money could be made illegally in the chaotic state of the country, and we needed money. But we all understood that our days were numbered. So, between operations, we caroused. We drank and feasted like condemned men.

CHAPTER VI

INVISIBLE VENGEANCE

NORMAN KENTON closed the copybook, the last. He went down to the hotel dining room, sat before a table covered with linen, sparkling with silverware. The food was not yet what it had been before the war, but he had a good meal nevertheless. In five years, in ten years at most, everything will be as before, he thought.

Norman looked at his watch. He had an appointment to play cards with three other Americans, late that evening, starting at ten. He could kill time by going to the movies, or he could take a walk. It was safe enough for an American. Partisans and former Vichyites still exchanged a few shots on occasions, but they left the guests out of it. A man intercepted him on the front stairs, and when he removed his battered hat, Norman recognized the floor waiter.

"I hope you won't be angry, Captain—" he started.

"What about, old man?"

"Well, I let a woman go into your room and—"

"I say, that's stupid. You get her out at once. I like to—"

"Oh, it's not a chicken, Captain. A lady, a young lady. She said you knew her, that you wouldn't mind."

"She knew my name?"

"Oh yes, she said, 'Captain Kenton, the American.'"

"And she said I knew her?"

"Yes, Captain."

Norman pushed a bill into the man's hand, turned and climbed the stairs quickly. He stopped before his door to catch his breath, inserted the key. The door swung open, he entered, closed it behind him and looked around. For an instant, the room seemed empty. Then a woman came from behind the bathroom door, a tall, very handsome young woman in white summer costume, wearing a large hat.

"Don't you recognize me, Captain?" she asked.

"Yes, I do. I must ask you to leave, I am a friend of Frederic—"

"You're not very nice," Adele pouted.

"Go away," he said with mounting anger. She had spoken mockingly of Emilie as a saint. She was a cheap little hussy—

"Oh, Lord," Adele said, "I'd heard of Americans like that, but you're the first I've run into!

I'm not going to eat you, you know. And I'm not going away. I'm too young to go away and be murdered."

"Who's going to murder you?"

"Your pal Frederic, if he finds me." She sat down, crossed her legs and lit a cigarette. Her legs were slim and graceful in sheer silk stockings. "I don't want money, just a little help. Better sit down—you freeze me standing there. That's better. I'm sorry to bother you, but what else can I do? I 've got to get out of town immediately. I want you to help me hide in an American truck. I know the drivers will give girls lifts—"

"Can't you operate yourself?" Norman asked with calm insolence. "You're equipped for it, you know."

"Thank you. But I'd have to stand in the open. I can't do that. The police would pick me up—for questioning about Frederic. Or Frederic would find me and—and probably strangle me. He's back in town since eleven this morning. I was supposed to turn something over to him and I haven't got it. Frederic is half crazy, in case you don't know it, and when he gets violent, he is very violent."

"Why do you come to me? I believe the transport officer would sympathize with your situation. Moreover, you could give him a different story, so that he wouldn't knowingly be helping you escape from the police. No money and a sick aunt in Paris, for instance."

"I might be seen, and Frederic would have the truck stopped on the road. There are still people who will do what he orders, you know. Don't worry about smuggling me out. Once in Paris, I know how to vanish completely. He will never know."

"Sorry, I can't help you."

"You don't understand," she insisted, growing nervous. "I'm trying to keep calm, but I'm in danger of being killed. You ought to know Frederic."

Suddenly, she wept, and twisted her hands. Norman was still skeptical. "Captain Kenton, when we abandoned the house in which we'd lived so long, Frederic was away. He had given exact orders as to when we were to leave, what to remove. Well, I forgot something he told me to bring to the new place.

"He came back this morning, and asked me for it. Then I remembered I had forgotten it—it hadn't seemed important, and there was a car waiting. He should have told me it was so important. How could I guess? He grew furious and said he was going over to see if he could find the stuff. If he didn't, it would be too bad for me. He said awful things, in that quiet voice he uses when he's about to do something crazy. He said, 'I have spent months preparing this, and I won't stand for a little clot of dirt like you stopping the whole works.' And he said, too, 'Don't try to get away, everything is watched.' He went out and came back this afternoon, without the stuff. Somebody had taken it. He's investigating, and if he doesn't recover it by midnight, I'm in for it. Now, if you could get one of your trucks to stop in the alley behind this hotel, I could sneak out and—"

She thanked Norman with much emotion in the only way she knew.

"What was it you forgot, Adele?"

"Oh, some junk he kept in a secret closet behind the bookcase. Bundles of letters, documents, I guess." Adele shrugged wearily. "I brought most of it. But there were some old copy-books—I was looking at them before putting them in the valise. I had never seen them before. Stuff about that girl, Emilie, was written all over the pages, and I thought, the devil! I'm not going to save his sentimental souvenirs. I'm what I am, but he needn't carry the torch so long. Then the fellow who was driving the van came in and said to hurry or the cops' patrol would catch us parked in front of the dump. So I closed the valise and left the stuff. I didn't really forget it, I admit, but it made me sick to see all that stuff about Emilie."

"And he's sore because you left them?"

"Yes, it seems they're important for something he wants to do."

"You know where Frederic is this minute?"

"Yes, I do."

"You could inform the police."

"No." She shook her head. "I don't do that sort of thing."

"If you found the stuff, you'd be all right with him?"

"Oh, yes. He's fair that way." Adele started to sob. "I'm crazy about him. I know he doesn't love me, that he only likes me, the way he would a dog. Half the time, he doesn't even know I'm there."

Norman opened the closet, reached up and took down the bundle from the shelf.

"Wouldn't be this, would it?"

Adele uttered a low shriek, grasped the bundle. Then she thanked Norman with much emotion, in the only way she knew. The flyer freed himself after a few seconds, smeared with lipstick and tears.

"Where did you find them?"

"Where you left them. On the floor near the bookcase." He waved his hand. "Now, take them to him and make up."

She frowned, shook her head. "I'm afraid to take them through the streets. The police might pick me up for questioning, and then they'd be lost again . . . No, I don't want to send a message or use the phone. Something might slip up." She thought for a moment. "I tell you—I'll go down and stay in the lobby a few minutes. Somebody will see me and report to him. Then he'll come here."

"Unless he gives orders for you to be shot from a distance, without further inquiry," Norman said. He remembered the shooting of Breittweller as described by Frederic, and looked uneasily at the windows.

"That's true, he doesn't know I've fixed it," she admitted. "Look, Captain, you're an old friend of his. You wouldn't squeal. If we go around the back streets, nobody will stop me if I am with you, because of your uniform. Then you can explain to Frederic how you found them."

"I don't like to get mixed up in this," Norman protested.

"But you are, you know."

It was true; he *was* mixed up in Frederic's life.

He picked up his cap, and they left the hotel through the service entrance.

THEY stopped before a tall, gloomy house on a side street. Adele pulled the bell handle twice, then twice again, and an old woman opened the door.

"Oh, it's you, Miss Berthel? Your brother is waiting for you."

Norman followed the girl up four flights. There was a ray of light under the door.

A man rose from before a small table as they entered. Norman might not have recognized Frederic if he had not expected to see him. The Frenchman wore a shabby, stained khaki uniform, with the chevrons of corporal and the badges of the Moroccan Infantry. His hair was cut short, and he had not shaved for several days. It was not really a disguise, but it served effectively as one.

"Glad to see you, Kenton," he said, shaking hands.

"He's got the—"

"I see." Frederic took the bundle of books from Norman, put it on a table. "Well?"

Adele explained, speaking rapidly. Frederic had thrust his hands in his pockets, and rocked on his heels. Norman could see that he was extremely nervous, although he forced himself to remain calm. When the girl was through, he reached out and patted her cheek.

"No grudge, darling?"

"No. But you scared me dreadfully."

"I suppose I did. But it was a bit thick, coming back and finding you'd muffed the one thing I had asked you to do. Now the captain and I have to talk."

Adele did not protest, left immediately.

"Sit down, Kenton," Frederic invited. He poured stiff drinks of brandy from a bottle under the table. "Good health, old man. I've kept myself going on this stuff for some time, you know. My nerves are in bad shape. So, you found my note all right?"

"After a while." Norman grinned ruefully and explained.

"I'm sorry," Frederic said. "You see how things go with me? I had the best intentions in the world, yet you might have died in that hole and I'd be taxed with another murder. There was nothing to do but get out of that place if we didn't kill the two of you." He shrugged. "Ah, well. Did you locate the people you wanted to see?"

Norman gave him a brief account of his visits.

"You're satisfied, you feel better? Good. I regret that I could not do more for you, but you see for yourself how I am fixed. And I had some business to attend to in Germany—"

"Germany?"

"Yes." Frederic's hand twitched as he lighted a cigarette. He was very jittery. "What the devil, I can tell you. I just had a hunch. I remembered that Breittweller had been married, had children—it was our business to find out a bit about peoples' backgrounds. His family never came here, even on a short visit, and I knew the reasons—first, because he did not want to endanger them, and second because he was unwilling to have them see him in his role as inquisitor. The type is not unusual, you know. Extreme cruelty and ruthlessness are often found in a sensitive, high-strung guy who dotes on his folks, his friends. It occurred to me that a man of that sort would write often to his wife, and to sort of ease his conscience, describe what he was up against. Moreover, his letters would not be subject to censorship, so he could write freely."

"I get it," Norman nodded. "But how did you manage it?"

"Easily." Frederic touched his cuff. "I went as a staff-captain, with very authentic credentials. Breittweller's family had had a home in Munich, but his wife had taken the kids to a lodge out in the country. I was afraid that we'd find the house ruined, gutted, but it wasn't. I had with me a very intelligent chap, an American, who was in uniform. At his request, we were assigned to an Intelligence captain and even given a small escort. Very glad to oblige a corresponding officer in the French army, you understand. Frau Breittweller made no trouble at all; the search was carried out with all official formalities. Then I put on this rig to get back unnoticed."

"Why didn't you stay away?" Norman wondered.

"Because my job here isn't finished." The Frenchman lifted his hands. "You say, 'Stay away.' But where would I go? Sooner or later, I'd be spotted and extradited. There are people who will never forget me." He indicated the copy-books. "Did you read them?"

"I must admit I did, yes."

"Then you know. What do you think?"

"Think of what?"

"Of me, of what I did? Do you understand? Had you been in my place, what would you have done?"

"I don't know."

"You see? You knew Emilie, you loved her. Perhaps you would have done the same thing. I got a transcript of the whole business; the swine were methodical and made reports." Frederic rubbed his temples, smiled. "How do you like this? 'The suspect was about to lose consciousness, so we suspended the questioning for ten minutes and called in the matron.' But she did not tell them anything. If you know women, you know they are not concerned with large issues. She wanted to protect me, and she did. Right to the end. Have a drink?"

"Thanks. What about Adele?" Norman asked.

"Oh, no importance whatever. Very much like this—" Frederic tapped the bottle.

"I mean, would you have—"

"Killed her? I suppose so. It was terrifying to find she'd lost those books. They're very important. Oh, not for what you think. I'll explain." Frederic took a fountain-pen from the table, handed it to Norman with a pad. "Sign your name, or write anything you like."

Norman wrote, *When in the course of human events—*

"That's enough." Frederic took the pad and laid it on the table. "You know, toward the end of 1944 it became rather obvious that the show would be over within six months. And it became obvious to me, also, that many people would dislike me, for in a way I was a cop. So I drew up lists of people who had supplied me with information against various other people, to justify certain actions. And lists of people who had been in touch with the Gestapo. Many names are on both lists—an informer is an informer. Lewis, the Englishman, countersigned them. They're there, those names, with the dates. Look at this—"

Norman took the pad offered him, and it was blank.

"Invisible ink, you see." Frederic smiled. "Safer in those days. I was going to jot them down in notebooks and then write something or other over them. Lewis advised against it. He said that experts could easily distinguish writing done for that purpose, that there was some psychological twist in a guy's mind which made him write pointless filler. Emilie had brought these books I had written in as a kid—my first gift to her. So I used them. No expert could ever guess that that writing screened anything. When I ran out of space, I started new ones, and wrote about something interesting—my life. It never occurred to you that there was motive other than vanity in my writing the stuff, did it?"

"No, never."

FREDERIC opened a tiny bottle bearing a pharmacy label. The stopper held a glass rod. He smeared the pad on which Norman had written, and the writing showed, reddish.

"It'll vanish in a few minutes," Frederic said. "Has a number of advantages. Unusual formula with an unusual feature—you must know what to use. The ordinary re-agents obliterates the writing completely. You know, chaps who do this sort of work know what is tried first—heat, then a number of solutions. This won't react to heat, you get it? There are a couple of thousand names listed, quite a job. Some of them would surprise you. Conditions here during the Occupation were made to order for the vindictive, the envious, the jealous, even the joker.

"It was a temptation. Suppose you are an employee in some large firm, next in line for a good job. You make your choice between the Gestapo and the Resistance. In the first case, you write, 'So-and-so takes strolls near the railway station often—he notes the troops passing through.' That's enough to get him picked up. To the Resistance you write: 'You wonder who tipped off the Boches about the aviator? Ask so-and-so.' And you get your promotion while the other chap's in jail, or after he's killed. Or say you're a middle-aged man with a pretty wife younger than yourself. She has a cousin of whom she's very fond. There's nothing wrong as yet, but you think there may be soon. A couple of notes and

he is arrested as hostage, or deported to Germany. It's the *lettre de cachet* within the reach of all. Police departments are flooded with such mail all the time. It does no serious harm, since there is time to investigate. But the Gestapo did not have the time, and hostages had to be found some way, so they'd arrest easily. We, on the other side, tried to check up, and I don't think we made many mistakes. But we must have made a few. And when you're dealing in death, a mistake is fatal."

"But what can you do with those lists now?" Norman pressed. "The war's over. If there were so many doing it, you can't hope to punish everyone. You can't shoot or jail a tenth of the population!"

"But there is other punishment. Public reprobation. It is very unfashionable now to have played with the Boches. So much so that a few have been selected to be punished for all. Reminds you of a little boy who washes his hands as far as the wrists, because the rest is covered up."

"How are you going to work it?"

"I have an idea. What are you doing tomorrow?"

"Tennis in the morning."

"Skip it. Do you like melodrama? Well, be at the tribunal tomorrow at ten-thirty. Old Man Resseguier's due to speak again. Better still"—Frederic lifted a finger— "I'll pick you up at your hotel and we'll go together."

"Are you crazy? You'll be seen. I went once, and it's pretty depressing, you know. Guys droning on and that poor old fellow— But you're related, I understand."

"My grandfather. That's why I want to be there. It'll be all right, you'll see." The Frenchman steadied his hands by locking them together between his knees. "I loved him more than anyone else in the world at one time. Wonderful chap. Tender hearted as they come. But he thinks workmen are loafers, got into rows with my father, I hear, because he was for unions, and sick benefits and all that. The old boy admired the Germans long before the war, even if he hated them. Said they had discipline, industry, all that. Oh, he's guilty as hell. He thought the Nazis would win—they had everything, from his point of view. If the word fascist has any meaning, he is one."

"Think he'll be convicted?"

"If it goes to the jury, yes."

"Won't you be arrested on sight, if you go?"

"I don't think so." Frederic smiled. "It'll be stirring to see, no kidding, and I'd like you there. You saw some of the beginning, you'll like the end."

They shook hands and Norman went to play poker.

He was awakened the following morning by a loud knocking on his door. He felt as if his skull were being battered in with hammers. The poker game had broken up after four and his watch indicated only nine minutes after seven.

"Go away!" he shouted.

"It's me, Cap, Jimmy."

"Jimmy? Oh—wait a minute."

He slid back the bolt and let O'Byrne in. Then he yawned, went over to the wash-bowl and ran cold water over his hands, splashed his face and the back of his neck.

"Look, Jim, I'm glad to see you, but couldn't you have—"

"Came by train, Cap, and I have to report to the cops here as soon as they open for business at the Sub-Prefecture Building. There's something I want to talk to you about. Look, that guy Frederic's in dutch all around. I'm not supposed to do this, but nobody told me not to. He could have cooked me and he didn't. You get it?"

"Sure. Go ahead."

"Well, if you can get word to him, tell him he was double-crossed, that we know all about that trip to Germany he took and we're turning it over to the French authorities here. He can get into plenty of trouble for what he did—impersonating a French staff-officer, getting transportation, gas. He had an American with him, a guy who used to call himself Captain Greenwood, real name of Merovak. When he got back to Paris, this guy started to worry, thinking that maybe what he did was espionage and a shooting offense. So he gave himself up, confessed everything. Also, he told us, he wanted to call it quits—he has a girl in Long Island. If he sees her before five, six years, he's a magician. Liable to get twenty years." O'Byrne shrugged. "Of course, he loaded it all on your friend. Your pal got the papers they traveled on, he says. I've been with a lieutenant to French Headquarters in Germany, to see about those papers. Our bunch is pretty mad, but you ought to see the French. One captain got hysterics because it was his pass your pal used."

"What good do you think it will do to tell him?" Norman asked.

"You never know. In his business, knowing something fifteen minutes ahead of time makes a lot of difference." O'Byrne gestured, indicated that he was again in uniform. "I've asked for a transfer. I wanted to go home. Never was meant to be a cop."

O'Byrne stayed on for several minutes, then they shook hands, after making a date in the States. The CID man was taking the eleven o'clock train out.

Or so he said. Norman was learning caution, distrust. Of course, O'Byrne had good reason to be grateful to Frederic, nevertheless, it was very possible that this was a ruse, that someone might be waiting to follow Norman if he left the hotel to try to get in touch with the fugitive.

He killed time by writing postal cards to a

few people and a short letter to his kid sister. She was twelve and appreciated overseas mail.

CHAPTER VII

ANYTHING FOR A GAG

AT TEN o'clock Frederic knocked and came in. He wore an unfamiliar uniform and carried a leather case which he placed carefully on the bed. He shook hands and helped himself to a drink from a bottle. "Here's health, Kenton. Last drink," and as Norman looked up, startled, he grinned and added, "in that bottle. The uniform? Belgian. Unusual around here so people look at it and say, 'That Belgian is a dead ringer for Frederic Langlois.' Sure it works, I came in through the front entrance!"

He looked much better than the night before, Norman thought. He had shaved, his face was rested. He had amazing nerve to go about town so openly, but perhaps this very assurance was what carried him through.

"Remember O'Byrne? He was in to see me."

"Should have been here yesterday. I told Charley Merovak to give himself up the moment he hit Paris. They'd have got him inside three days, anyway. Things are tightening up now. The big spree will soon be over for everybody."

"What are you going to do, Frederic?"

"Give testimony." Frederic chatted easily, about Merovak, his activities, his chances of getting off with a minimum of two years. Then he rose suddenly. "Better get started."

He led the way downstairs and into the street, talking with animation about Belgian politics. The uniformed cops saluted the pair. To Norman's surprise, Frederic did not head directly across the square, but diagonally, toward the Sub-Prefecture Building. They trotted briskly up the outside stairs, entered the maze of corridors.

"We better separate here, Kenton," the Frenchman said, and offered his hand.

"Why?"

"From here on, there may be trouble." Frederic smiled faintly. "I'm afraid I used you, after all. You see, that stretch from the hotel was the hard one to negotiate. I'd have been too conspicuous alone and, of course, the moment I'm stopped for questioning, it's all over. With an American officer, cops would hesitate—"

"What am I supposed to do?" Norman challenged.

"Go back to your room and deny having seen me."

"Would it bother you if I tagged along?"

"No, if you don't interfere."

"I'm curious to see what happens."

Frederic looked at him and laughed. "All right. The more the merrier." He started off again, with long strides, descended a stairway, passed through a tunnel. "Connects with the Court Building, used by employees only."

An elderly guard in a greenish uniform with silver buttons was at the foot of the next flight of stairs. Frederic nodded to him and asked, "Is this the way to Monsieur Fresnel's office? You know, the judge."

"Yes, sure, but the session is on—"

"How long do you think it will last, my friend?" Frederic placed a bill in the man's hand.

"Well, maybe until eleven-thirty. The judge will declare a recess until three then; he is having lunch with the Sub-Prefect."

"I understood ten o'clock," Frederic resumed, with a show of irritation. He made as if to turn away, then asked, "See here, is there some place where I can consult my papers and write?"

"There's a clerks' room. Tell the usher upstairs Evariste said you could use it."

"Thank you."

Norman followed Frederic up the stairs, into other corridors. Another old man rose from a long bench and came to meet them.

"Evariste said we could wait in Judge Fresnel's ante-chamber," Frederic announced, producing another bill. He also held a piece of paper in the palm of his hand. "Special convocation," he added.

"You'll have a wait, I warn you," the usher said. He walked some distance, turned a door knob. "In there. His secretary should be there, but I bet he's sneaked inside to hear the act of accusation reread." He indicated a rather large room with plain oak furniture. "Sit down anywhere. I can't go in court. You'll have to wait until somebody shows up." He smiled, closed the door and his shuffling steps receded down the hall.

"And that's all there is to it," Frederic remarked to Norman. "They have more than two hundred men around front, and nobody here. There are cops detailed, but from ten to ten-thirty, they're across the street, having a snack." He was arranging the straps of the leather case, which he suspended over his chest. A thin metal wire ending in a large ring dangled to his belt.

Then he sat down on one of the hard chairs, lit a cigarette and smoked, half-smiling, silent. Norman noticed that he had started to perspire. He wondered what he should do. Frederic talked rationally, but his gestures were growing jerky. The big leather case, which Norman had assumed contained the copy-books, now took on sinister importance. Perhaps he should stop now, leave. Frederic seemed to have read his mind.

"Too late, old man."

"You're not going to try anything foolish?"

"Oh, no, nothing foolish." Frederic smiled

held a gun—he had seen men confronted with guns before. The three filed quietly into the chamber of justice, emerging behind and somewhat to the left of the judges' bench. Frederic closed the heavy door with his heel and nodded for Norman and the cop to sit on a settee running along the wall.

The immense, high-ceilinged room was packed with several hundred spectators, standees pressed against the walls. Several hundred pairs of eyes turned to the three as they entered, but the judges did not move, nor the attorneys. A tall chap in a red robe was making thunder in the pit. When the crowd grew restless at the unexpected apparitions, the presiding judge raised his voice angrily, ordered the spectators to be quiet or he would have the room cleared. Obediently, the crowd became very quiet, almost frozen, waiting for the officials to grasp the situation. Their glances forced the judge to twist in his easy-chair. He saw Frederic.

pleasantly. "But you will see for yourself." He rose, extended both hands before him, flexed his fingers several times. "Not too nervous, I mustn't be too nervous. Go ahead, open the door very quietly—we don't want the old boy coming back. That's it, keep walking ahead of me, turn right—that door—that's it, I'll close it . . ."

There was a policeman in the gallery they had entered, with his back to them. He stood at the crack of a door, listening to a loud, declaiming voice. When he turned and saw the two newcomers, he backed up immediately. Norman did not need to look back to know that Frederic

"WHAT'S the meaning of this?" he snapped. "Guards—"

"Please order the guards to remain in place, *monsieur*. You will understand in a moment." Frederic held the pistol inconspicuously alongside his right leg. "My name is Frederic Langlois—"

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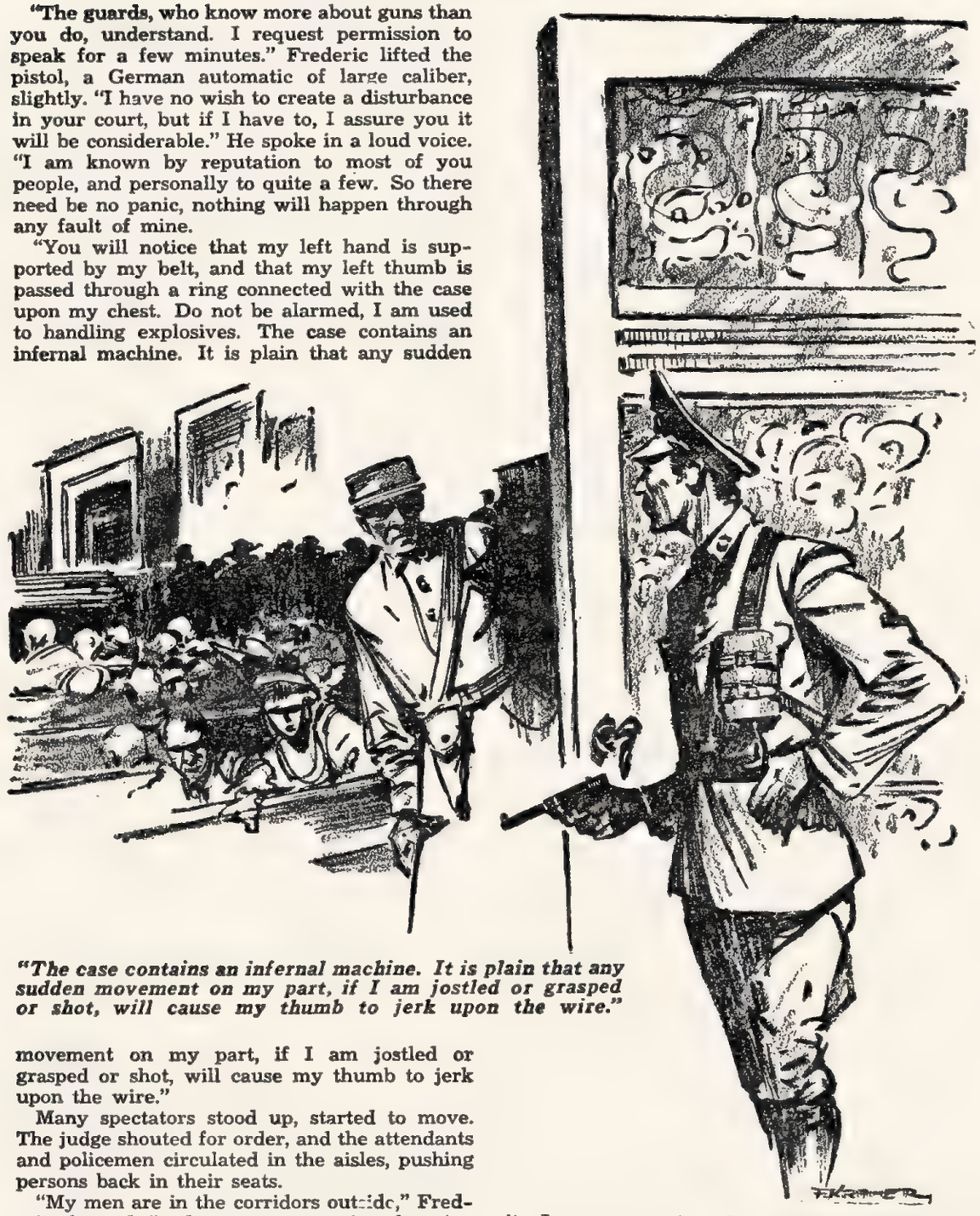

"The case contains an infernal machine. It is plain that any sudden movement on my part, if I am jostled or grasped or shot, will cause my thumb to jerk upon the wire."

"The guards, who know more about guns than you do, understand. I request permission to speak for a few minutes." Frederic lifted the pistol, a German automatic of large caliber, slightly. "I have no wish to create a disturbance in your court, but if I have to, I assure you it will be considerable." He spoke in a loud voice. "I am known by reputation to most of you people, and personally to quite a few. So there need be no panic, nothing will happen through any fault of mine.

"You will notice that my left hand is supported by my belt, and that my left thumb is passed through a ring connected with the case upon my chest. Do not be alarmed, I am used to handling explosives. The case contains an infernal machine. It is plain that any sudden movement on my part, if I am jostled or grasped or shot, will cause my thumb to jerk upon the wire."

Many spectators stood up, started to move. The judge shouted for order, and the attendants and policemen circulated in the aisles, pushing persons back in their seats.

"My men are in the corridors outside," Frederic shouted, "and some are covering the windows. I repeat that there is nothing to fear if I am not interfered with."

Silence returned within a few seconds.

"Now, what do you wish here?" the judge challenged. "This goes beyond a joke—"

"It isn't a joke," Frederic replied. "Far from it. Let me say that the explosion would not be formidable, atomic—not more than twenty or thirty people would be killed outright, but the debris from windows, chandeliers, furniture would doubtless injure many others. I regret that one cannot speak freely in France these days unless one carries a bomb."

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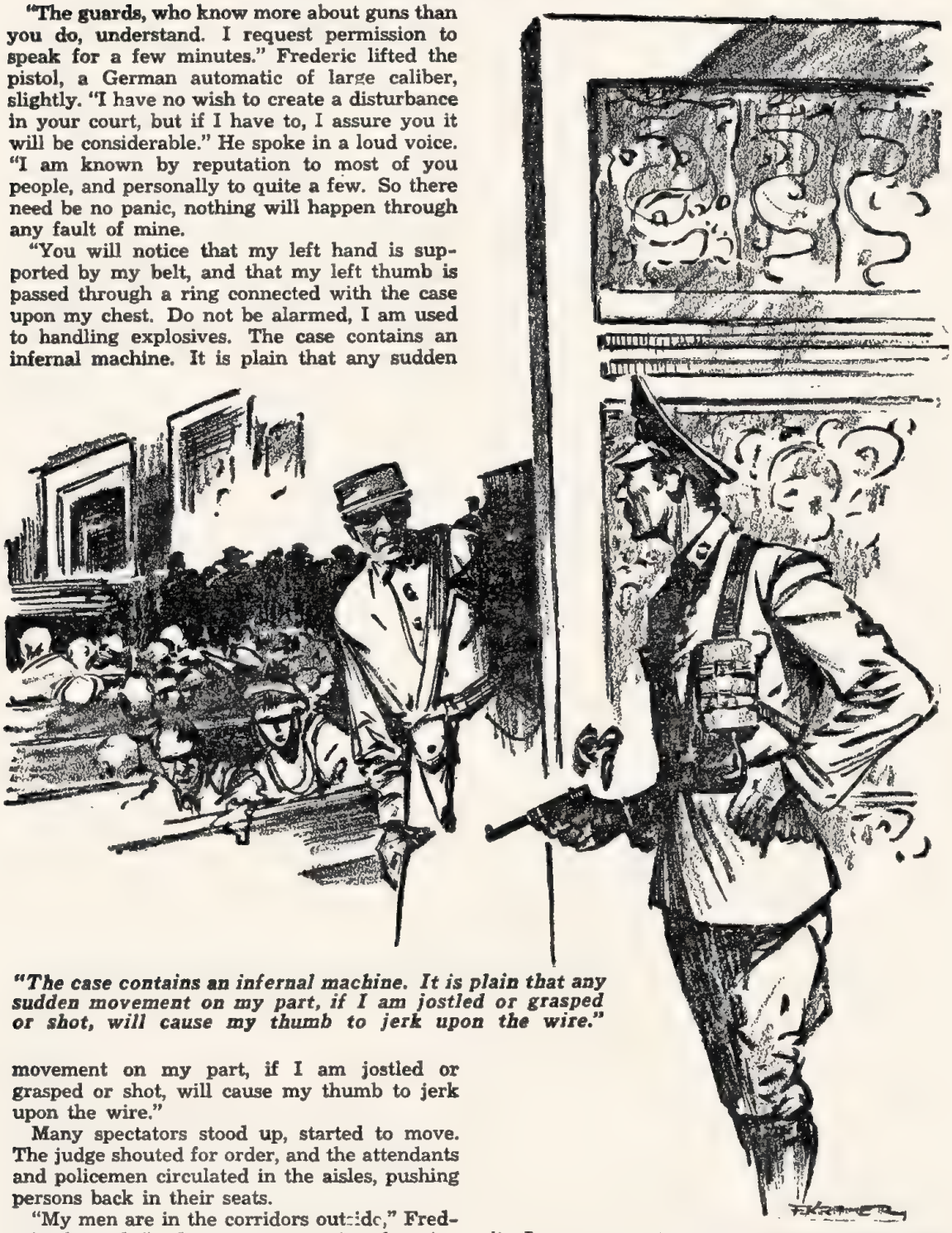

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Norman considered the scene from his bench. He remembered that Frederic had mentioned melodrama. He certainly was producing it. The spectators had settled down and now hardly moved. Everything considered, everyone was behaving very well, and one was forced to admire the judges and officials. They kept calm, showed no panic. The jurymen, in their enclosure, might have been made of wax. The defendant had lifted himself slightly at the beginning, nodded toward his grandson. He sat back now, smiling and distant. The gendarmes flanking him were easing their collars and sweating.

"Better keep the doors shut," Frederic resumed, moving forward. "I get nervous when a door opens suddenly." The judge made a sign, and the policeman went back to lean against the door.

"This is intolerable!" The judge felt that he had to talk. "You must be conscious of the extravagance of what you are doing."

"Haven't you realized, *monsieur,*" Frederic said, "that you are dealing with a madman. I am insane, *monsieur,* in my own right and by heredity. You must know that. So there is no disgrace in being patient and kind to me until this paroxysm has run its course."

"No irony, please."

"I wouldn't dare to be ironical in these chambers, *monsieur.* If I am not thwarted, everything will be all right. But the least contradiction might bring about the spasmodic contraction of the muscles—"

"Please hurry and end this—this—"

"I promise not to make you miss lunch." Frederic swept the room with a slow glance. "I see we have several newspapermen from Paris, and a few Americans. By the way, the young captain I entered with is in no way to blame. I am sure he would have prevented my coming at all, had he foreseen my behavior. But one doesn't argue with a pistol—"

"I must request you to—" The judge shrugged, clamped his jaws.

"I'll be as brief as possible, briefer than most speakers in this court." Frederic had stepped to the bench, laid the Belgian uniform cap and the pistol before him.

"To start with, the trial of this old man has dragged on too long," Frederic opened. He probably had memorized his oration, for he spoke without pauses or breaks. "There is no doubt that he collaborated with the Germans during the Occupation. His actions were plain, so the only thing in doubt were his opinions. He is guiltier than most, because he did not collaborate through fear and pressure alone, but from deliberate choice. He saw salvation for France in the National Socialist system. Everyone knows that, he doesn't deny it. This whole trial was a comedy.

"Concerning collaboration: Everyone who lived in France through the Occupation collaborated to some extent, for one reason or another. I devoted some time gathering data on the records during the Occupation of the distinguished gentlemen connected with this trial—judges, attorneys, lawyers. They all may be said to have collaborated at times. Monsieur Pucereau, prosecuting attorney, communicated his agents' reports to the German Security Police when they asked.

"Like Montaigne, I hold that it is neither seemly nor honest 'to hold a staggering or middle course, to bear an unmoved affection, and without inclination in the troubles of his country and public divisions.' But you all staggered at times, gentlemen, you all held a middle coure, because it meant life.

"Where did France find her lovers and her patriots? Among the millions—but devotion and courage do not run steady courses. The wealthy, the prosperous, showed a lower average than the working men, the poor, the unfortunate. Because they were under closer observation, more exposed. Many men here spent anxious days, months, years, as hostages. Many women. That is almost a guarantee of good citizenship, of patriotism, but not quite. Some of you must be uneasy, thinking of the methods used to obtain release.

"Look at the jury, look at the jury." Frederic handed an envelope to the judge. "I have sent a duplicate of this to several newspapers, in case you mislay it. They have been summoned to pass on the guilt of a collaborator. I shall cite one or two: The first is a butcher. Look at him, a fine father, a good citizen. He bought cattle from our farmers, butchered them and, in days when famine reigned, refused to sell to local people, because he could obtain more money from the Paris gangsters who acted for the Germans. I am not speaking of army requisitions, but of private deals. Over there is a realtor, a Frenchman now judging another Frenchman. He informed the German authorities of certain substitutions of land titles and mortgages from a Jewish businessman to a non-Jew. It was not unpatriotic or spiteful; it was purely business as he profited by the seizure. I could continue for quite a while.

"But I came here on a personal errand. Monsieur Thirion-Debouix is the first juror, selected because of his reputation for integrity, a well-known notary and bailiff. Many people smiled at the choice, for many people know of his passion for speculation, gambling. What they do not know is that this gentleman's passion led him to gamble the life of his only daughter —and lose it."

"YOU lie!" Thirion-Debouix shouted. He leaned on the edge of the box, and all eyes turned to him. He was a rather tall, bony man in his fifties, clean-shaven, with a gentle, pink face topped by a brush of silver

hair. "Frederic, I know who misinformed you. I have tried to locate you to explain. There is nothing against me but a liar's word—"

"Be quiet!" Frederic said. He reached into his pocket again, and brought out a thin package of letters, which he dropped before the judge. "You can have official translations made. I know them by heart." He gestured, and hundreds of people shrank. They did not like to see him move suddenly. "These letters were sent by a man you all will remember, Herr Breittweller, to his wife. The American Army Intelligence will confirm that I found them in her possession. This very morning, they transmitted a complaint against me to our regional police for stealing them. That should be proof enough that I did not forge them."

Norman nodded to himself. Frederic was perhaps insane, but he certainly had covered himself. So that was why he had urged the pseudo-Greenwood to get out from under!

"Breittweller mentioned very few names. He was discreet as befitted a good spy. But I can tell you from memory what he wrote a short week before his death. 'War roils the souls of men and brings horrible traits to the surface, my dear. After a day at this work, how I long for you, the dear children and the quiet of my home. I do not feel clean. I hope that Almighty God preserves our country from such an ordeal. I would sooner be with my battalion in Russia than here, many times. But one obeys orders. I am shaking with disgust. A man asked for an interview outside my office, fearing to be seen. His daughter is the girl-friend of Langlois, about whom I have written you, and for whom I have been driven to offer such a large reward.

" 'The man I saw is highly respected in this community, he is a church member, handles properties and moneys, and looks like a benign grandfather. Here is what he proposes to do: He will bring his daughter to his house by subterfuge. Of course, he does not want to be suspected by her or by his neighbors. So he will arrange to have her arrested by the French police, and the blame will seem to fall on another man. He gave me the details, and I almost retched in his face.

" 'The young woman, he assures me, is timid, gentle, and it will be very easy to make her talk. He is certain she will tell us where the man is hiding. He says he loves her dearly and is doing this chiefly to take her away from an evil life. He did ask me to guarantee that the woman would not be too roughly treated—*pas trop maltraitée*—and I refused, telling him that once a suspect was turned over for questioning it was up to the official in charge. He said he understood my position, and that he was sure she would be persuaded to talk without much trouble.

" 'Then he asked me what arrangements I would make for the reward, currency and so on. He suggested that I give him a signed promise in case I should be transferred. I understood what he meant by transferred. I have information that the *francs-tireurs* have sworn to kill me. You must not worry; I am well-guarded, travel with full protection, and the fear of retribution will make them hesitate. Yet there are colleagues of mine who chaff me about my desk job, and throw out their chests to show off their crosses. I envy them often.

" 'I told him very sharply that he would have to take my word. He asked me then to leave at least a memorandum for my successor, in case I were transferred. I would have liked to strike him, throw him out. But the man we seek is important and has done us much harm. As a German, I had to accept what I would have scorned as a man. I told him I would leave the memo, and that if the criminal should be arrested through his plan, he would be paid. That was all, except that when he left, he had the impertinence to offer his hand. I took it—part of my disgusting job.

" 'You know, my dear, what affection I hold for the French people, how I love Paris. Many of them are admirable, even in their misguided patriotism, in their reluctance to face facts. I have said, always, that their authors misrepresent them before the world. But in truth, a perusal of my files—' "

Frederic ceased speaking for a long minute. Norman looked at Monsieur Thirion-Debouix who was fussing with the lapels of his black coat, touching his tie, trying to smile.

"I deny that I am the man concerned," he said, loudly.

"You are the man," Frederic said, extending his right hand. "My name is mentioned. Everyone in this city knew I loved your daughter, everyone must have guessed where she went when she disappeared. Everyone knows your daughter was taken into custody by the French police in your home, and that within a very short time the Gestapo van came for her. You were wrong. She was not timid, she did not talk. God knows the mircle of heredity that gave you such a daughter."

Thirion-Debouix shrugged and sat down. Norman wondered at his composure. Didn't the man know what Frederic had come for? Perhaps not. He had misjudged his daughter, and he felt safe surrounded by gendarmes.

The crowd appeared to have relaxed during Frederic's speech. The judge was drumming soundlessly on the wood, with plump, manicured fingers.

"*Monsieur,*" he said at last, "we heard you patiently. You have placed a great number of persons under a dreadful strain. You have had your say. It is not compatible with the dignity of this court to make promises, but I assure you the charges will be examined carefully and all legal steps taken to—"

Frederic flushed a little.

"You're an ass," he said. "And I suppose your

last word will be a bray. I came here with a purpose—several purposes. One is to safeguard the few followers left me. I dismissed them one by one, most of them against their wishes. I give you my word that they will become good citizens. However, if they are arrested and prosecuted, I shall borrow from our enemies the system of hostages. I cannot execute, but I can shatter reputations.

"I was in command of the Resistance. We had friends everywhere, even in the courts, gentlemen. And we received any number of denunciations. We also kept a list of the persons who visited the Gestapo, complete with dates and often with the subject discussed. Call it blackmail on a gigantic scale if you wish. But if anyone is arrested on charges preceding May 15th 1945, twenty-five names and particulars concerning each will be mailed in to the leading newspapers here and to two Paris sheets. The original list, signed by me and countersigned by an accredited agent of the British Government, is in safe hands, and photos of the pages will be placed in the hands of justice."

"This sort of intimidation," one of the assistant judges blurted out, "as anyone knows, will not—"

"Oh, yes, it will," Frederic said. "As a matter of fact, that sort of thing goes on constantly in your profession. You know very well that a young magistrate who has chanced to discover a superior in an error or a lapse from strict duty finds himself promoted again and again. Would you wish me to continue, Monsieur Crozet? I can cite you example after example if you wish it.

"I'm almost through. We're going through the aftermath of a long war and four years of occupation by a foreign power. Conditions will become normal again. But during chaos, to quote Montaigne again: 'The common weal requires some to betray, some to lie, and some to massacre.' My part was to massacre. I am weary of it. But I must go on, for a few minutes longer.

"*Monsieur,* will you add your prestige to my request that nothing be done to interfere with me? There is no need for panic. I'm sorry to have to place so many under further stress, but it is necessary. I claim but two lives here. If they are granted, I shall be satisfied and leave. If not you will have on your conscience the lives of many innocent people—"

The judges and the attorneys consulted each other with glances. There was nothing to do but wait. Frederic picked up the pistol, seemed to weigh it in his hand. There was a moment of silence and then Frederic spoke.

"Stand up, *grand-papa,*" he said. The old man stood up, one hand on the rail, the other in a coat pocket. Norman saw the pulse beating in his thin, wrinkled throat. He smiled. And Frederic shot him through the heart.

THE odor of gun-powder drifted.

"The trial ends as it should have started," Frederic smiled. "One for France."

He indicated the case on his chest, to remind everyone that he still ruled. Then he looked toward the jury, lifting the pistol. "On my word, just one more!"

Thirion-Debouix no longer trusted in the Law and its enforcers. He had crouched below the level of the light-wood partition, out of sight. His colleagues kept moving away from him as he crept from corner to corner.

"I'm sorry"—Frederic's voice was calm—"but if I shoot now, I may injure someone. If you gentlemen would make room—"

They would, and did, leaving the box one by one, pushing into the crowd. Everyone was moving slowly, like somnambulists. It did not seem very real, Norman thought; it was impossible. Yet it was happening, and Frederic's left thumb controlled the situation.

"Stand up, you fool!" Frederic cried. "These people are in a hurry, and I don't want to shoot more than once—"

"I demand protection, I demand protection!"

"Come out here!" Frederic turned to the judge. "I don't like to go after him; it isn't very safe for me to move about, you know."

"I implore you not to commit another murder!"

"Oh, God!" Frederic said, shrugging. "Well . . ." and he fired at the partition. Thirion-Debouix came scuttling out, unhurt, like a huge hare in gray striped trousers, yelling incoherent pleas. He ducked and passed between the legs of the nearest men. Frederic could not shoot at him without endangering the others.

"Better have him brought out," Frederic suggested.

"You go to the devil!" the judge said.

One of the prosecuting attorneys had cracked and tried to rush at Frederic, screaming that he wanted it over with. Three of his colleagues were holding him. Women had started to scream again. Then there was a melée in the benches; people appeared to be fighting. At last, Norman realized that they were not fighting, they were lynching Emilie's father.

"You murderer, you child-peddler, you monster—Blue Beard—Landru—traitor—ogre. . . ."

The notary now fought to get clear of the mob. Fists, nails, pocketbooks, boots, rained on him. His collar was torn off, his face was bleeding, gashed. He leaped out into the clear space before the bench, panting, and looked from side to side like a trapped animal. Frederic held his shot, followed him with the muzzle. Thirion-Debouix saw a clear path to one of the windows, darted forward. Frederic fired once, dropped him, then aimed carefully and blew in his skull.

"One for me," he said.

He stepped away from the bench.

"In a minute I'll be gone. Clear the door, clear the door!"

"There are people there now," the policeman said, in an anxious voice. "I have to explain to them that they mustn't touch you. I have to explain—"

Frederic understood, evidently, for he moved laterally against the wall, coming to a stop beside the bench on which Norman sat.

Norman saw him turn the gun, place the muzzle in his mouth. He could have prevented the gesture, had he thought in time. But his whole instinct was concentrated on that left hand, on the thumb. His own right hand closed on Frederic's left, and he held on—circling the man's body about the chest, pressing down on the leather case. He felt the jar of the detonation, the sagging of the body. He clenched his teeth, overcame disgust, horror, and hung on.

Then a lieutenant of gendarmes came toward him. "Keep steady, Captain. I'll try to clear this up—"

Norman felt the other's hard fingers prying beneath his palm, at the ring circling the thumb. Other men, some in uniform, some not, had come near, gave suggestions.

"Thumb won't slide—cut the wire. Here's a penknife; no, be careful, we need clippers. Send for clippers, or a strong pair of scissors. Hold on, Captain, hold on—"

"It's all right," Norman said. "I'll hold."

TEN minutes later, Norman was in a washroom of the Court Building, cleaning up. His blouse, shirt and tie were a sodden heap on the floor, ruined by blood. A dozen Frenchmen surrounded him, solicitous, holding towels.

A page from the hotel brought him a change of clothing and he was allowed to go into a stenographer's room. His ears were ringing, his right hand felt stiff—and he needed a drink.

O'Byrne came in as he was knotting his tie.

"Thought you were catching a train—"

"Oh, yes." O'Byrne shrugged and grinned. "Missed it."

"Thought you might, Jimmy. Trailed me, eh?"

"Sure. I knew you must have found out where he was. But I was waiting three blocks down, watching the hotel, expecting you to come out. I never figured he'd be the one to come in. Then I saw you come out with a Belgian, and I wasn't sure. I followed you into the Sub-Prefecture, and lost you. By the time I found out about the underground passage, you were inside the courtroom."

"What gets my goat," Norman said, "is the way my luck breaks lately. Everything I try works out wrong. I get locked up for ten days, then I try to help that dame, Adele, and then Frederic plays me for a complete sucker. I've been making a fool of myself ever since I got here. I'm leaving today."

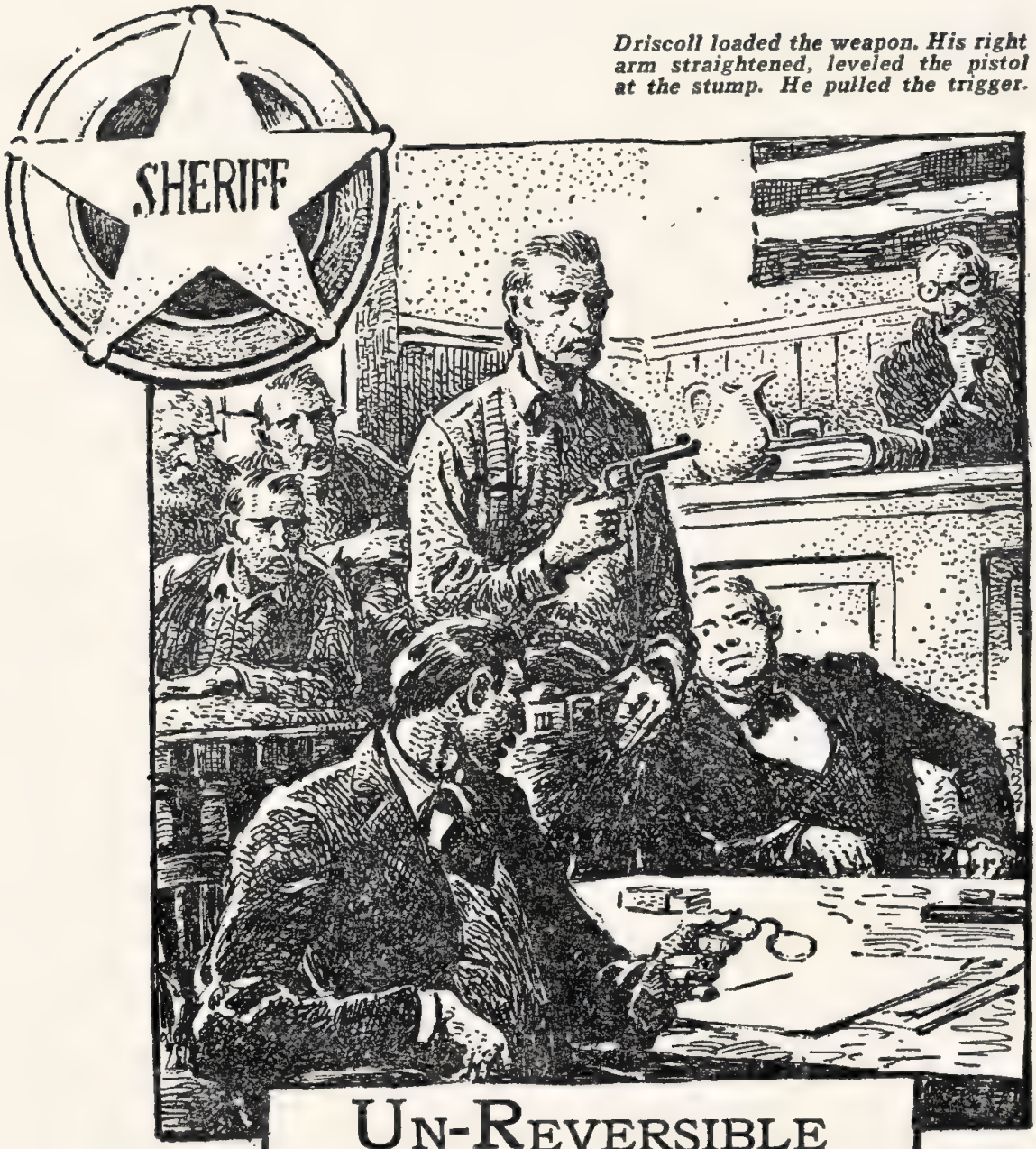
"I wouldn't, Cap. You had your play at the end. You're the little guy with his finger in the dike. They'll be giving you a dinner at the Town Hall, with speeches."

Norman wiped his forehead at the thought. "They can skip it, you know. I wouldn't go through it again for a million bucks—with the guy bleeding all over me."

"Something to tell your grandchildren, Cap, in the years to come."

There was a knock on the door, and the lieutenant of gendarmes came in. Norman hardly recognized him. All the creases in his face went upward, and the eyes which had seemed bulbous and staring sparkled in pleats of skin. "It is too droll, after all; it is too droll! That Frederic! It was a bluff, Captain, the laugh is on you! There was nothing in the case, nothing but little bags of buckshot and old newspapers for wadding!" He slapped Norman on the shoulder. "Ah, you will come to know us Frenchmen— Anything for a gag. That Frederic, what a practical joker! I don't think the judges will permit it published. What a joker, what a joker!"

O'Byrne started to laugh, then Norman. But the young captain did not laugh as loudly as the others. He had believed in the bomb. And then, when you thought of Emilie and the others, of the old man and the notary, you did not feel like laughing at all.



Driscoll loaded the weapon. His right arm straightened, leveled the pistol at the stump. He pulled the trigger.

UN-REVERSIBLE ERROR

ILLUSTRATED BY NICK EGGENHOFER

By WALLIS M. REEF

GRANITE COUNTY'S courthouse was packed for the afternoon session when Sheriff Driscoll stalked in the side door, two full strides behind his prisoner. Grunnito looked back over a shoulder, apparently sensing the old man's feigned negligence, and stopped beside the defendant's chair. "I ain't duckin'," he taunted, "so don't get no fancy ideas about pluggin' me in the back, see!" His thin lips twisted. "You're gonna help me beat this rap, sucker."

"Set down," Driscoll snapped.

Grunnito hesitated, then laughed derisively. "O.K., chump." He dropped into the chair and ran a hand over black hair pasted down like a skull-cap.

The sheriff hung his worn Stetson on a peg, tipped back against the wall in his wire-strutted hickory chair. His blunt, weathered chin grazed his flannel shirt as he opened a long clasp knife and began stropping it on the sole of a high-laced boot, hoisted over one corduroy-clad knee. From under craggy brows, his eyes, light blue as a columbine, flickered over the throng.

"Worryin' you, ain't he?" prodded Coroner Abbott, bald and pudgy, as he eased himself into a chair alongside the sheriff.

Driscoll ignored the gibe, continued his probing of faces on both sides of the railing.

"Well, he better, you dang-blasted ol' buzzard," Abbott growled. "There sits the sneakingest two-legged coyote ever hit this county—and by the great gallopin' gila if you ain't already committed plumb reversible error again!"

The sheriff's voice had the rasp of dry aspen leaves. "I ain't aimin' on this mangy polecat gettin' loose no more as you, Hank Abbott. Didn't I ketch him red-handed?"

"Ain't that. It's you rilin' up on the witness stand and this new judge havin' to set on you like a rockslide off'n Old Baldy. He shore taught you a trick or two."

Driscoll snorted. "I been lawin' almighty close to fifty years, since you and me set up court under a cottonwood—"

"And you ain't halter-broke yet," Abbott cut in. "Take that Callepsy case. Only this time, Todd Driscoll, I'm remindin' you it was my niece's boy, Johnny Lockwood, that this snaky-eyed gun-slinger shot in the back." The coroner's face flushed with rising anger. "Johnny, just home from fightin' Japs, and right in this here county he gets plugged hangin' onto that payroll. Talk is you been elected once too often, Todd Dris— Oh, howdy, Mr. D.A."

Mattison, the new district attorney, nodded to Abbott, stopped in front of the sheriff. He had wide shoulders, curly brown hair and a round frank face.

"Sheriff"— Mattison's voice was too low to be overheard by Grunnito or his counsel—"I'd like to talk to you about your testimony."

Driscoll motioned with a thumb. "Step over. You're blockin' the view."

Mattison stiffened, but moved next to Driscoll's left elbow. "I'm new at this and you're an old timer," he said placatingly. "But in a murder case we must be exceptionally careful to comply strictly with every legal technicality. Once before, I understand—"

Driscoll, testing his knife blade on a horny thumb, interrupted. "You got reference to that Callepsy case?"

"Well—yes. I've been told Judge Chandler granted a new trial because of error—inadmissible testimony you volunteered on the stand."

"And inside thirty days I had to go clean into the next county to nab that high-grader all over. Provin' my testimony was tighter'n a cinch on a mule."

"Yes, I know. But that didn't cure the error in the trial, Sheriff. Ah—I realize that a tough environment makes people hard, gives a man a pretty stern sense of justice, but this is a court of law—"

"Chock-full of gopher holes," Driscoll broke in irritably. "When you're after rattlers you don't hobble yoreself. Now, 'bout my testimony—"

"Well," the prosecutor began, "frankly, I'm not certain you didn't go too far yesterday on direct examination. You—ah—sort of take the bit in your teeth. I'm worried about your cross-examination this morning, and I want to caution you about this afternoon. You're our most important witness. Don't let Hetherington bait you into causing a mistrail, or laying the groundwork for reversal on appeal. Weller, this new judge, is a stickler for technicalities, and his attitude seems—ah—definitely antagonistic."

"I ain't aimin' on spilling yore chips none," Driscoll said, "but keep peeled for a joker."

Puzzled, Mattison asked, "You mean they've got something up their sleeve?"

"I've seen sign cropping up."

"Well, we could have had a better case. If we'd had a confession, or if we'd gotten a ballistics report on that pistol. . . Or maybe you mean Hetherington, the defense attorney. He's tricky, but I believe I can hold up my end."

"You'll need to," remarked Driscoll unflatteringly. He began slowly re-stropping the point of his knife—a gesture of dismissal.

Mattison hesitated, walked to his seat at the long table.

Abbott's chuckle threatened the safety of the buttons on his shiny black vest. "Handsome kinda took you down a peg," he whispered gleefully.

"You always was a weaselin' cuss," Driscoll grumbled.

A BAILIFF'S gavel called court to order as Judge Weller, short, with a large head and sharp, bright eyes, took the bench. He nodded to Hetherington, and the defense attorney, starched, confident and pompous, announced, "Recall Todd Driscoll."

Hetherington lifted gold-rimmed spectacles by their black ribbon, inspected notes on a yellow pad. He cleared his throat and inquired, "Sheriff, you testified this morning that you arrested this young man, Louis Grunnito,

at a cabin about ten miles from the Juniper Jane mine, near what you described as Little Beaver Lake."

"Uh-huh," grunted Driscoll.

"How long," asked Hetherington, "how long was that after the attempted robbery at the mine and the unfortunate death of Mr. John Lockwood?"

"Five-six hours."

"Now, you say you found this revolver, marked People's Exhibit K, fully loaded, in a cupboard in the cabin occupied by Mr. Grunnito?"

"And a forty-five automatic and two rifles."

"I didn't ask you about anything but this revolver," barked Hetherington. "And I remind you the court has instructed you to confine your answers strictly to the questions asked. However, Mr. Lockwood was not killed with a forty-five caliber automatic or with a rifle, was he, Sheriff?"

"Hank Abbott already showed you the lead from the thirty-eight that done it, and that's a thirty-eight." Driscoll pointed to the pistol, Exhibit K, on the court reporter's table.

"Precisely," agreed the defense attorney, evidently highly pleased. "Now, Sheriff, I will ask you whether you ever saw Mr. Grunnito fire this weapon, Exhibit K?"

"Didn't have no chance, after I covered him from the back door."

"I didn't ask you that," Hetherington clipped his words. "Your Honor, I again renew my request that this witness be required to confine his answers and make them strictly responsive to the questions. I ask that this last answer be stricken."

"Answer stricken, jury instructed to disregard it," Judge Weller's voice crackled. "This witness has been warned repeatedly—now answer the questions and don't volunteer information that isn't asked for."

Hetherington bowed; Driscoll's close-cropped white moustache bristled like a cactus patch.

"Now, Sheriff"—Hetherington shot forward his white cuffs—"answer yes or no. Did you ever actually see this defendant fire this revolver?" He held the weapon before the witness.

"Well, now, as I was ridin' my sorrel down the draw near where the Juniper Jane is minin' molyb'num for the war—"

"I demand that this witness answer yes or no!" shouted the attorney.

"Answer yes or no," intoned the court ominously.

"Can't rightly say I saw him," Driscoll said cautiously. "But I heard—"

"That's enough!" Hetherington cried. "I didn't ask you what you heard." Waving his arms, he protested, "Your Honor, it's impossible to proceed under these circumstances. This witness flagrantly disregards the direct order of this court. I'm prepared to submit a motion for a mistrial."

Mattison was on his feet but Judge Weller stopped him. "If this witness persists in this high-handed conduct, I shall hold him in contempt of this court," the judge rasped. "Statement of what this witness heard is stricken. Proceed."

Hetherington, making a show of smoothing ruffled dignity, queried, "Was this boy, this defendant, armed when you arrested him in his home, where he was vacationing?"

Mattison stood up, evidently hoping, somehow, to prevent Driscoll from incurring the further displeasure of the court.

Hetherington whirled on the prosecutor. "Are you trying to signal this witness?"

Judge Weller's gavel fell before Mattison could answer. "The State's Attorney will sit down unless he has an objection to make," the court snapped. "Witness, answer the question."

The sheriff took his time before he said, "I don't recollec' he had a gun right on him, but—"

"Aha—so he was unarmed!" Hetherington flung the words to the jury triumphantly. "That's all." He winked at his client as he sat down. Grunnito laughed derisively as Driscoll strode to his hickory chair. "Chump," he snarled out of the corner of his mouth as the sheriff sat down.

"The State rests," Mattison announced. He sat down, dejected as a benched substitute.

"I have a motion—a motion for a directed verdict of not guilty," Hetherington declared in ponderous tones.

"The State objects—" began Mattison, but Judge Weller interrupted. "Motion overruled at this time," said the court. "Defense will proceed."

"Exception," replied Hetherington, bowing. He spread his chest, shot forward his cuffs and faced the jury. "The defense will prove," he said, "beyond the slightest shadow of doubt, that the defendant, this young man, could not possibly have committed this heinous crime. We ask the court's indulgence. . ." He motioned to four men who scurried out, returned with a large cottonwood stump which they placed against the wall, just across the courtroom from the jury box.

"You shore got yore hide hung out," Abbott hissed in Driscoll's ear. "That lawyer and that judge skinned you clean up to the eyebrows."

"Stop gabbin' and keep yore eyes peeled," Driscoll retorted.

Hetherington summoned Cal Jennings, proprietor of the Lode City general store. "I requested a box of thirty-eight caliber cartridges from your open stock," the attorney prompted.

"Glad to oblige," Jennings said, extending a cardboard box.

Hetherington took the carton, broke the seal.

Driscoll was on his feet, stealthy as a panther. Grunnito leaned forward, dark eyes and thin face intent.

"I ask the court's permission to have this weapon, Exhibit K, fired at that stump," Hetherington said, picking up the weapon. "I suggest that Sheriff Driscoll perform the experiment."

Before Mattison could object, the sheriff rasped, "Call him, Mr. D.A."

A juror chuckled. To protest would be to antagonize the twelve men in the box. "No objection," Mattison said, and sat down.

Driscoll took revolver and cartridges, loaded the weapon. He stood close to the jury box, his back to the talesmen. His right arm straightened, leveled the pistol at the stump. He pulled the trigger.

Women ducked against the forthcoming explosion, men tensed. But there came only a metallic click as the hammer fell, harmlessly. Six times Driscoll snapped the hammer, and six times the revolver failed to fire.

A girl giggled, then laughter swept like brushfire. A juror whispered hoarsely, "That gun never killed Johnny Lockwood."

"I agree with you," Hetherington, picking up the words, said, smiling. "I now renew my motion for a directed verdict of acquittal."

JUDGE WELLER motioned the attorneys to the bench. Driscoll, with painstaking care, unloaded the pistol, placed cartridges and revolver on the court reporter's table, and went slowly back to his chair. There was a low rumble from the crowd. Todd Driscoll had been tricked and beaten by a city gangster. No telling how it had happened, but the old sheriff and the young prosecutor had fallen down on an open-and-shut case. Resentment stirred; there wasn't much Judge Weller could do but let this flashily dressed hoodlum off. "We better git ourselves a new sheriff," mumbled a miner on the first row behind the railing. Two women sitting beside him nodded.

Grunnito looked over a shoulder at Driscoll and his lips drew back from his teeth, a fuse which touched off Coroner Abbott.

"By the great gallopin' gila," his bitter voice jabbed at the sheriff, "you proved their whole dang case!"

Driscoll pulled out his old knife, hoisted one boot and slowly stropped the blade. "Hank," he said, "the caps of them bullets is plumb unmarked. That jasper foxed us—he filed off the gun-hammer atween the time he plugged Johnny and the time I snared him."

"The murderin' coyote!" gritted Abbott. "Tell the D.A.! Tell the judge! Blast 'em out!"

Driscoll shook his head. "Can't prove nary a thing."

"They was files in that burglar's kit you dug up under his cabin."

"They ain't in evidence. Court said we didn't prove he owned 'em."

"You got his record—he done time as a burglar."

"You know dang well they'd 'a' been a mistrial if I tole that to the jury."

"Well, by the great gallopin' gila, Todd Driscoll, you going to sit here like a jaybird and let this killer get off scot-free?"

"I don't calc'late no such thing." Driscoll toyed with his knife, folded it, stood up. Ranging himself beside Mattison at the bench, he said, "Mr. D.A., I got a hankering for a mite more evidence."

Mattison turned angrily. "My God, man. The evidence is concluded."

"You're bounden by oath to represent the people—hell or high water." Driscoll's frigid tone was a command, backed by the steady impact of his light blue eyes.

"But the court's considering a directed verdict," Mattison protested. "Well . . . what evidence do you mean?"

"Rebuttal."

"This is nonsense," laughed Hetherington. "You can't rebut a pistol that wont' shoot."

"The State has the right to offer rebuttal—if it has any," the court remarked sourly.

Mattison, plainly smarting under this indirect rebuke, tried to pull Driscoll away, but the sheriff wouldn't move. "Tell 'em I want another whirl with that six-gun," he instructed the prosecutor.

Hetherington, listening intently, flung up his hands, guffawed. "This is utterly preposterous!"

Driscoll cut him short with the challenge, "You backing down?"

"What?" Hetherington shot a glance at the jury. The men were leaning forward, hanging on every word and gesture. "Experiment all you please," the defense attorney scoffed. "It's highly irregular, but—"

Driscoll already had snatched up the revolver, was carefully inserting one cartridge. He sidled to the edge of the jury box, holding the pistol casually, close to his right hip. His glance lifted to the stump against the opposite wall, and every eye followed his hawk-like stare. There was no tensing of his arm, no attempt to aim, but flame suddenly spurted from the weapon and there was a crashing explosion.

The courtroom was caught off-guard. Before the blast died away, women screamed and a bailiff leaped up, hammering for order.

"I reckon," Driscoll said drily, turning to the court, "that lawyer was mistaken 'bout this six-gun."

"Louie! Louie!" Hetherington was screaming, running toward his client.

Grunnito had slumped in his chair, arms

dangling. From a dark splotch between his eyes something trickled across the bridge of his nose, spattered his white shirt. He twitched suddenly, slid to the floor before Hetherington could reach him.

"This is murder!" Hetherington screamed. "I demand—"

His words were drowned by the cries of spectators, surging against the railing. Jurors had been pulled to their feet and even Judge Weller was standing, shouting for order. Driscoll brusquely helped a bailiff restore order.

"Deader'n a mackerel, Your Honor," announced Abbott, rising from beside Grunnito's body. "As coroner, I'm takin' custody of the remains."

Hetherington waved his glasses on their black ribbon and tried to get the court's attention, but Abbott shouldered him aside and declared, "Judge, under my authority as coroner, I'll take this here pistol and cartridge."

"Uh—very well," Judge Weller agreed, and sat down. "Regarding Sheriff Driscoll—"

"Thanks for mentionin' it, Judge," Abbott quickly responded. "I'm holding him. Todd Driscoll," the coroner said, turning to his old friend, "you're under arrest. Under the law that makes me actin' and ex-officio sheriff."

"This is most unusual," said Judge Weller hesitatingly.

"That's the statute, Judge," retorted the coroner. "I got the chapter and paragraph." When Judge Weller offered no protest, Abbott declared, "Now, as coroner, I'm orderin' the inquest at ten o'clock day after tomorrow mornin'. You first six men in the box—report as the coroner's jury. Subpeenys later." His pudgy finger darted toward Hetherington. "And I'm orderin' you as a witness at the inquest." To the court he said, "Well, Judge, that 'bout winds 'er up, all legal and according to Hoyle."

"Yes—yes, I guess it does." Judge Weller still perched on the edge of his chair. "I'll enter an order in this case later. Court's adjourned."

When the courtroom was cleared, Driscoll, who had quietly resumed his customary position in his hickory chair, remarked quietly to Abbott, "You shore took in a lot of range."

"You," barked the coroner, "you either stay in that cluttered-up two-by-four you call an office till after the inquest, or I lock you up proper in yore own jail."

The front legs of Driscoll's chair hit the floor with a thud.

"Don't argy with the law!" Abbott shouted. "I'm acting and ex-officio sheriff. And by the great gallopin' gila, I don't propose to have no wild-eyed, gun-slingin' catamount 'dangerin' innercent lives—not while I'm actin' and ex-officio. Todd Driscoll, wasn't I sittin' right back of this defendant you plumb deceased? Right in that chair? Suppose you'd 'a' missed? Gimme that star off'n yore chest!"

THE next two days Driscoll spent in his office, diligently cleaning up the piles of police circulars and papers on the huge table that faced the door, sorting out the accumulation of years in the pigeon-holes in the battered roll-top desk. Late in the afternoon of the second day, he was slouched in his old swivel chair, laced boots propped on the table, when Abbott came in, followed by Mattison.

The coroner's eyes widened at the neat appearance of the office, but he said sharply, "Git those feet down. As actin' and ex-officio—" He stopped as Driscoll meekly obeyed.

"What's that?" Abbott demanded, pointing to Driscoll's two black-handled .45's, his worn cartridge belt, holsters and handcuffs, all neatly arranged on the table.

" 'Purtenances of the office," Driscoll replied.

"Huh!" Abbott dismissed the subject with a shrug. "I been to Denver," he announced.

Mattison said: "We took that pistol that you—ah—with which Grunnito—"

"The one you bumped that defendant off with," Abbott interposed.

"Well — ah — yes," Mattison accepted the statement. "We had it examined by ballistics experts—"

"Know how we fired it?" Abbott demanded.

Driscoll shrugged, his eyes wary.

"The coroner," Mattison explained, "put a brad out of the heel of a boot in the hammer-hole. The hammer drove it home and exploded the cartridge."

"Got the idee from one of them tack-brads I found on the floor of the courtroom," Abbott added, idly.

"We fired three rounds that way," Mattison went on, plainly eager to continue his story, "and what do you think? The bullets compared exactly with the one taken from Johnny Lockwood's body. It proved Grunnito's guilt conclusively."

"Everybody knowed that," Driscoll commented without enthusiasm.

"Ain't everybody could prove it, 'specially in court," Abbott flung back. He waited for an expected argument and when none came he said, casually, "Had a' inquest today, just finished. Tole 'em 'bout that gun, and I shore skinned that defense lawyer." He chuckled and turned to Mattison. "Bet he ain't over that raw-hidin' yet."

"I didn't get no inquest subpeeny," Driscoll said sharply.

"You was in custody," Abbott retorted. "Besides, you'd had the right not to talk, 'criminatin' yoreself, et cetery."

"I wouldn't 'a' claimed no such thing, and you know it," Driscoll shot back. "I'd 'a' tole just what happened—"

"Will you keep yore dang trap shut?" thundered Abbott. "The D.A. here was telling you something."

"Why, yes." Mattison met Driscoll's eyes. "I want you to know how much I appreciate your backing me up in my first case. The coroner's told me a lot about you, these last couple of days. I think I understand your—ah—direct methods a little better."

Driscoll's mouth was tight. He made no comment.

"The verdict of the coroner's jury," Mattison went on, "was that Grunnito came to his death as a result of an accidental gunshot, fired by yourself in the performance of duty. The jury called it an act of God."

"So," said Abbott, "I'm restorin' you to yore office." He fumbled in a vest pocket, tossed the sheriff's badge on the table. "This was so all-fired scratched up we got it re-plated in Denver."

"Kinda fancy," Driscoll eyed it critically.

"By the great gallopin' gila," roared Abbott. "You hear that? After all we done, and nary a thanks from this blasted ol' buzzard."

"Much obliged." Driscoll smiled for the first time.

"Well," laughed Mattison, "I've got to be going. I hope, Sheriff, we don't have to depend on an act of God in our next case." He went out.

"Now," said Abbott, "hang that hardware back on." He pulled a tiny piece of metal from a paper wrapping, placed it on the table in front of the sheriff. "And don't put yore feet on nobody's table till you tack that back in yore heel." His rumbling laugh was like the bellow of a steer. "Act of God, huh! Me, now, I'd brand it plumb un-reversible error!"

SURRENDER WITH BREAKFAST

A Fact Feature

SPEAKING of historic surrenders in U. S. military annals, one not chronicled in the history books was staged over a couple of whiskey sours at nine in the morning in a small New York State hotel close to the Canadian border.

The scene took place in early June, 1866.

The American branch of the Fenians, a brotherhood of Irishmen who sought to terminate English rule in Ireland by force of arms and to establish an Irish republic, was planning an invasion of Canada that year.

Veterans returning from the Civil War joined the Fenian ranks. The reserve strength reached as high as 200,000 men, yet those who actually marched to the Canadian border numbered no more than 35,000 men. In late May and early June, 1866, the Fenians were stationed ready to strike, at points from Lake Erie to Lake Champlain; at St. Albans, Vt.; at Rouse's Point, N.Y.; at Malone, N.Y.; and near Buffalo, N.Y. They moved north in various guises. They had no uniforms. Arms and ammunition were hidden near the border.

As one Fenian unit was leading a "big push" at Fort Erie, another was moving out of Troy, N.Y. where at a national conclave it had been given a substantial fund to help defray the cost of the "war."

To one young Irish valiant of Troy had been entrusted most of the hidden supplies that had moved northward for days. He was Patrick Roddy, with the rank of quartermaster. Young Roddy spend the first night of the campaign in a small hotel in Malone.

The next morning he strode into the dining room for his morning coffee. It was the habit of Quartermaster Roddy to have a whiskey sour before his breakfast. As the waiter brought the drink this historic morning, Quartermaster Roddy saw a neatly dressed gentleman approaching his table.

"Are you Quartermaster Roddy of the Fenian Army?" the man inquired.

"Yes," replied the Irish warrior. "Sit down. Have a whiskey sour!"

"Yes, of course," replied the stranger.

When the drink was finished the unexpected guest said: "I am General Meade (George G.) of the United States Army. Your arms and ammunition at the border have been confiscated, your men dispersed. You had better go home."

Quartermaster Roddy did just that. Back at Troy he found the Fenian conclave still in session at Griswold Hall. A table at the front of the hall was covered with money as the large crowd continued to collect funds.

Quartermaster Roddy solemnly mounted the rostrum and called for order.

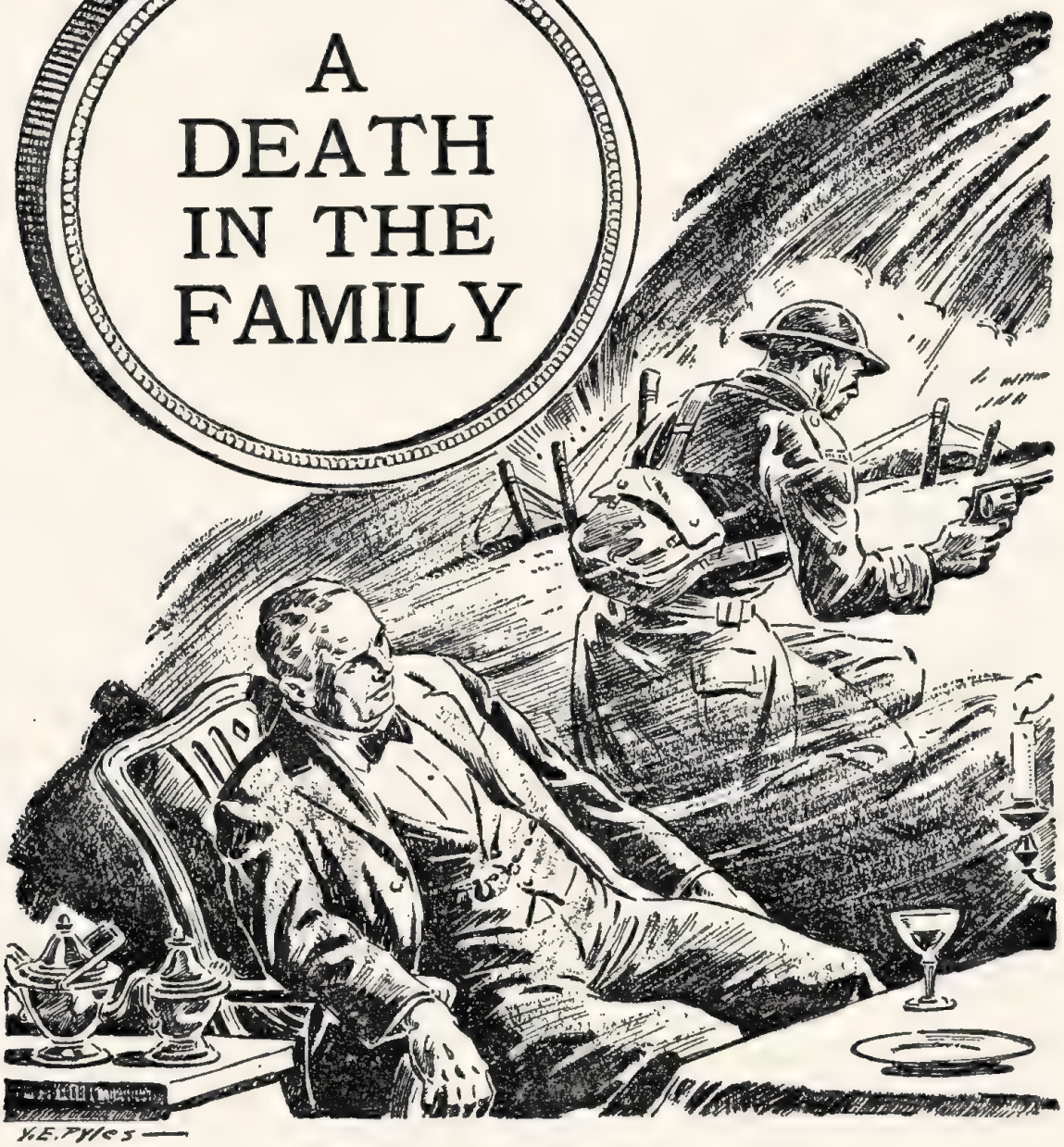
"Stop collecting money! The war is over. I have just been captured by the United States Army."

And that's how the "war" ended.

—by Cy Dingman

ILLUSTRATED BY V. E. PYLES

A DEATH IN THE FAMILY



By STUART CLOETE

"Twenty-two years ago today, at about this time, Jeremy was killed. A health to Jeremy."

I NEVER liked my brother. . .

Even as a child I had not liked the way he ate bent over his plate. It was not so much his manners I objected to. They were good enough. It was his style. His intensity. His complete absorption. But that was only one of the things I didn't like.

"Ever seen one of these?" I said, spinning a Mexican five-dollar piece across the table. It spun beautfiully on the polished wood—very fast, so that it looked like a shining yellow ball, and then more and more slowly

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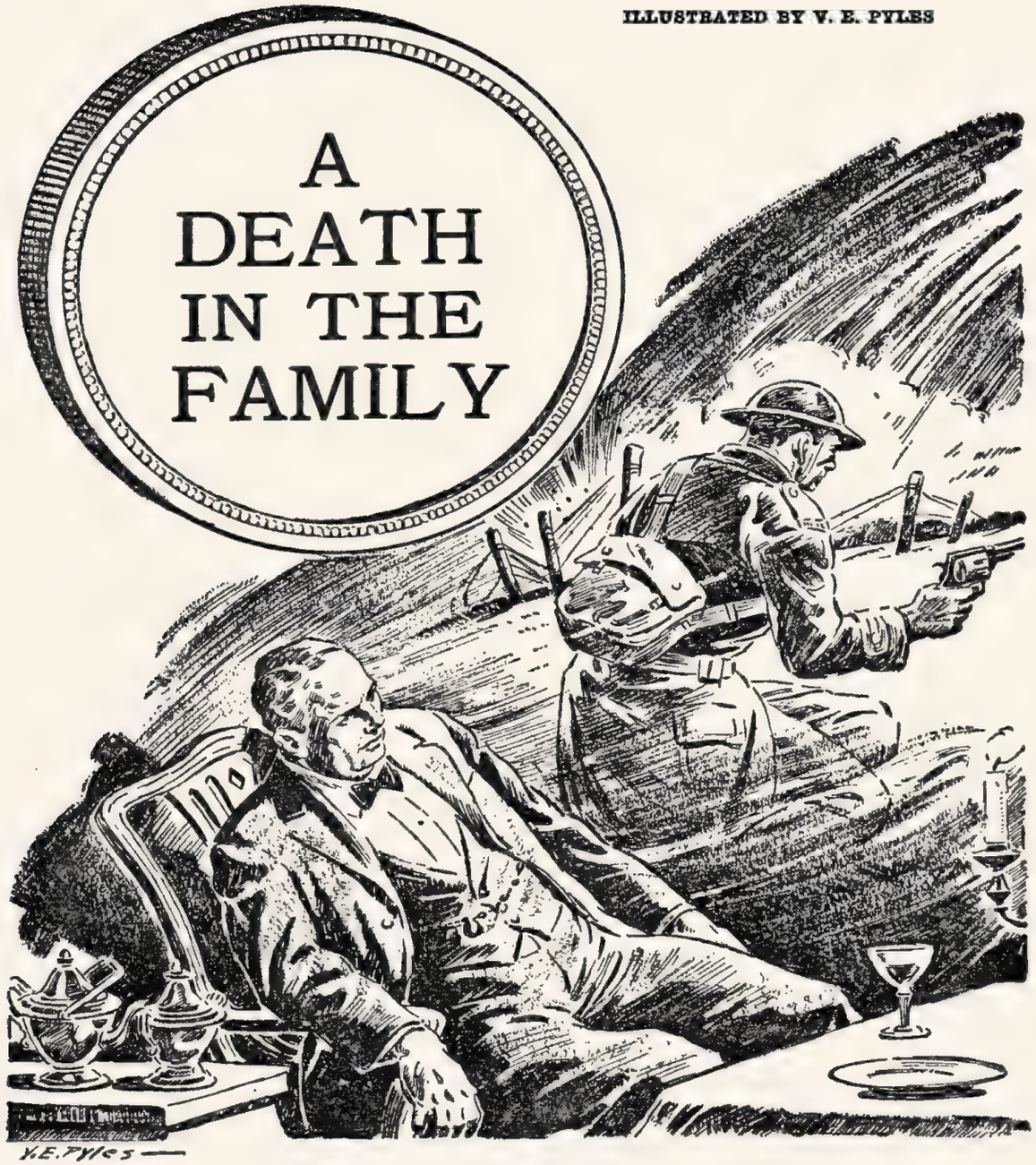

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"Why don't you sell it?" he said. "With gold at its present price. . ."

"Only a fool sells his luck," I said.

"You and your luck. It ought to be worth seven or eight pounds."

"It's worth a lot more," I said. "At this moment, Henry, I should say it was worth ten thousand pounds. You see, it's never failed."

"Port, sir."

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Henry's butler was beside me. I thought of the servants I had had at various times—black, brown and yellow; barefooted, dressed in white ducks, in sarongs. He filled my glass and I reached for my five-dollar piece.

Frazer closed the door behind him. Henry had had him for years and he gave me the creeps. A man wearing boots had no business to move so silently. I loathed the man. He was typical of the house and of everything in it. Expensive, efficient, with that smooth, futile efficiency that governs the life of the very rich. It must be like living in an expensive cuckoo clock—at exactly the same hour the same thing happened. More than ever I wondered how one lived like this. Fancy never coming in to find your whole household drunk. Never having to kill a snake in your bedroom. Never finding that a boy you had sent on a message was dead, killed by a tiger or in a brawl. Not even a storm to break the monotony. Typhoon, hurricane, earthquake, these were just meaningless words.

It wasn't my kind of life. The air smelled of petrol fumes instead of the sea and spices pleasantly blended with rotting fish and joss sticks. Coming home was never a success. I missed the heat and the color, the noises and the smells. I had been out of it too long. But this was business. I still had something to show Henry.

I looked at him with profound distaste. I could never get used to Henry. He was looking at me, breathing heavily through his mouth. From the open window came the faint roar of the traffic in Piccadilly.

I PULLED a little bag from my pocket and pushed it over to him. He touched it diffidently.

"It won't bite you," I said. I nearly laughed. The soft hand-tanned leather looked so out of place in his dining room, lying on the mahogany table, softly illuminated by the candlelight with a Waterford decanter reflected, wetly, beside it. That little bag was real. I would have been prepared to bet a monkey that it was the most real thing in Berkeley Square that night. He hesitated to pick it up. Still warm from my trouser pocket, greasy, creased into folds and faintly fragrant from the sandalwood box where I kept it, the little bag looked almost alive in his flabby hands.

"What's in it, James?" he asked.

I tried to think if there was anyone else who called me James. There was no one. I was Mr. Buchanan, Captain Buchanan, and Jim to most.

"I'm not certain," I said. "But the man who made it—he was a Dyak—said it was human skin. He said it came from the shoulders of a man and that he always found them to wear well. He was a particular friend of mine—the Dyak, I mean, not the man from whom it was said to be taken. He was a miner. . ." My voice trailed off. It was a bore talking to Henry. He always thought I was lying. Why should I bother to lie? I could never have invented things as good as those I knew. . . I wanted to get back to it all. Back to the silver river; to the slow hot rollers uncurling themselves, like lace, on a golden beach; to the palms and the bamboo jungles.

Henry had dropped the bag. Poor Henry's nerves were not right. How could they be, with the life he led? I don't suppose he'd walked five miles since the war.

"Nerves, Henry?" I said.

"It's not my nerves."

"Blood pressure, then," I suggested.

He turned an unpleasant red when he was angry and his neck filled up with blood like a turkey cock's when you whistle to it. How I disliked the man. It was odd, our being brothers. Odder, our being twins. We had not a single trait, not a single characteristic in common, unless . . . but even there we were different.

The bag lay on the table. His hands were on his knees.

"If you'd led a decent life," I said.

"A decent life!" he shouted. Now he was scarlet, just like a turkey but without a turkey's dignity. "Who are you to talk of a decent life . . . a wastrel . . . a wanderer . . . a man who has never made good at anything."

"But for all that," I broke in, "someone who has had much pleasure out of his life, who has seen many things. Shall I tell you some of the things I've seen, Henry?" I leaned my elbows on the table and bent forward.

His head, a pale blob divided by his tie from the startling white of his shirt, hung detached in front of me. The black tie was like a gash across his throat. The platinum-and-gold watch chain rose and fell on his paunch as he breathed. It is interesting that corpulence and grossness are always associated with success; that wealth, invariably, defeats its own ends; riches producing the adipose tissue and dyspepsia which prevent their enjoyment.

"Shall I tell you about the Mexican five-dollar piece?" I asked. "It was given me by a girl. She can't have been more than fifteen, but in those parts girls develop young. At fifteen she was a woman. She—"

"I don't want to hear about your women, James."

"That's most ungracious of you," I said. "But being a good host is not one of your gifts. Horses then. Shall I tell you about a horse I had once? A bay mare. No, I forgot,

horses don't interest you either. What about shipwrecks? Plagues? Wars? I feel like reminiscences tonight, and I have seen so much, so many interesting things. I have seen the way the French treat murderers in Cayenne. It's very interesting, Henry. Have you ever thought about the psychology of murderers? Wondered what they feel? Do you think they are sorry?

"Of course, the ones who are caught are sorry. Those poor devils working in chains. When their time is up in the penal settlement, they make a living collecting butterflies, those bright blue butterflies whose wings are used in cheap jewelry. And that's funny when you come to think of it. Murderers, men whose hands have killed, using them to handle something as delicate as a butterfly. The color is so ephemeral, Henry, just fluff. If you touch it, it comes off on your fingers. And what about the others who get away with it? I daresay some of them collect stamps, or glass, or pictures."

I LOOKED around the room, wondering how often I had seen it. Everything was pedigreed. Even the walls came into it, all covered with embroidered satin panels that had been made for Marie Antoinette. They were unique, Henry said. Did he think he owned these treasures? They had all belonged to other people. One day they would be sold again. Their association was that of chance. Their value as collectors' pieces had brought them together. Their value would part them.

There was nothing in this room that had been given to him. No one had ever said to Henry, "Do you really like it? You can have it." The house of a man who has friends is full of things that have been given him like that—a picture . . . a fish spear . . . a piece of carving from a temple . . . a little ivory god. So that he is never alone in his house.

Poor Henry. If he had been a fisherman, I thought, he would know. He would see the cast I had made. But he'd had no time for fishing. If he were a fisherman, I thought again, he'd know that I had him hooked, and the gaff ready in my hand. Of course, I'd had money from him before. But this time I wanted a lot. This time I was getting out for good. I got up for the port. It was like him to have put the stopper back into the decanter. I poured it out slowly.

"Still the Cockburn '08," I said.

"Yes, it's the Cockburn '08, and about the last of it," he said.

"What's in it?" he asked, looking at the bag.

"Rubies," I said. "Shake them out and hold them up to the light."

I watched him as he poured them from palm to palm. Rough, red pebbles that flashed dimly as the light caught them.

"Pigeon's Blood, they call the best ones," I said. "You can't tell how they'll cut, but they will be the color of blood, all right." I paused. He was holding up the biggest one, a five carat stone at least.

"Has it ever occurred to you that blood is thicker than water?" I asked.

The stone nearly slipped from his fingers. "Why should it?"

It was hard not to laugh at Henry sometimes. Walking round the table I filled his glass and sat down.

"Why did you do that?" he asked. "You know I'm only allowed one glass."

"This is an occasion," I said.

"An occasion?" He veiled his small eyes. They were savage, like a boar's.

"Never done any pig-sticking, have you?"

"Of course I haven't."

Of course he hadn't, I thought. Not like a boar's. Just pig's eyes . . . narrow and greedy.

"What's the matter with you tonight?"

"Nothing, Henry, only I'm excited. You never get excited, do you?"

"No man of fifty should get excited."

'Why not?" I asked. "Because it sends up his blood pressure? When I stop getting excited, Henry, I'll be through. Just think of tonight. This is a farewell. I'm off again. Think of the rubies. You know, I suppose, that there are practically no rubies left now, except old stones that come into the market when a Rajah wants cash. It's years since anyone has seen uncut stones, like those, that come straight out of the ground. It's a new mine. Untouched. There are millions in it, Henry. And. . ." I paused. "It's an anniversary."

"An anniversary?"

"Yes. There's a health we must drink tonight."

He had leaned forward. The vein in his temple was throbbing violently now as he watched me through half-closed eyes. But he had not closed them soon enough. Not soon enough for me, that is. For an instant, before those thin lids fell, I had seen fear. Just a flicker that had come and gone, but I had seen fear often enough to recognize it.

I looked at the clock. I had been watching it all through dinner.

"Yes, a health," I said. I stood up, clicked my heels together and raised my arm so that the elbow was level with the glass I held to my mouth.

Henry got up slowly, fumbling with his glass. "I don't know. . ."

He was watching me doubtfully. He never quite knew what I'd say.

"It's the twenty-fifth of September," I said, "and twenty-two years ago today, at about

this time, Jeremy was killed. To Jeremy," I said.

"To Jeremy," he said.

I raised my elbow, drank the port as if it were beer, and sat down.

"I was very fond of Jeremy," I went on.

Henry fingered the stem of his glass uneasily, turning it round and round. The faint scraping of the glass on the table and the ticking of the clock were the only sounds in the room. The hum of the traffic had died down.

"Brandy, James?"

"DO you remember the cavalry?" I asked. "They were ready to go through. The horses were saddled when we marched past them. All ready—only waiting for the word. You were marching in front, commanding the company. And then came Jeremy, at the head of number thirteen, and I was at the rear. It was funny our all being in that company. You commanding it, me second in command, and young Jeremy in it, too. He joined the rifles because we were in the regiment. He thought we'd look after him. We were his cousins, his nearest relations. You were his guardian, too. I always thought that a bit unfair because in some ways I could have done more for him than you could. After all, you had very little then, Henry. Henry Buchanan and Company wasn't such a hell of a concern in those days. It didn't have branches in almost every town, or offices in New York and Paris. . .

"How young he was," I said. "How trusting. There's something rather pathetic in the trust of the young. The great war, Henry. For freedom. England was to be a home for heroes. I gave sixpence to one of those heroes on the way here. He was playing a barrel organ. Jeremy was one of those heroes. He was killed twenty-two years ago."

"Wounded and missing. He might not be killed, James."

"So you still think he might not be killed, that he may turn up? That perhaps he has been suffering from amnesia for all these years? I think not, Henry. Young Jeremy. He would have been forty now. And no one ever heard any more about him. Do you suppose he fell into a shell hole?" I asked. "There was such a lot of mud. You remember the mud, don't you Henry? Fancy sinking into it, feeling it suck up at you when you are only eighteen with all your life in front of you. Feeling it creep up, nothing to hold onto, just slippery mud under your grasp and no one to give you a helping hand. I expect his finger nails were full of mud, and if he cried out who would have heard him? There was so much noise. There was that battery of seventy-fives behind us," I went on. "Drumfire. By God, how could a boy's voice be heard in all that noise. . . And you had forgotten it was the anniversary, Henry."

He was pouring brandy into his glass.

"Is that the '65?" I asked.

"Yes."

"You live well, don't you. The best of everything. '65 Brandy, '08 Port, '14 Pommard. You ought to finish that Pommard; it's beginning to go off."

I watched his throat expanding and contracting as he gulped his brandy. He was drinking as if he needed it. It seemed a waste to drink it like that.

"Tell me what you think of those stones," I said.

"They look all right."

"They are all right and there are lots more where those came from. I've got the concession, Henry. It's just a matter of the capital to work it."

"Everything is a matter of capital." There was a trace of the old pompous Henry in his voice. He had regained control of himself. The brandy was working. When it was business, he was on his own ground again. His thin lips were curled inwards as if he were trying to swallow them.

"Quite right," I said. "Especially initial capital. Just a few thousand needed to start a show. . ." I took out my five-dollar piece again, put it on my thumb nail and flipped it up into the air.

"Put that damn thing away, James."

"Right," I said.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"Nothing just now," I said. "I was thinking."

"Yes, thinking."

"Yes, thinking," I said. "I was thinking about the capital that was used to start Henry Buchanan and Company. I was wondering what you would have done without Jeremy's capital. Without that money you'd still have been a broker's clerk, or you might have been in jail. You've no guts," I said. "All you've got is a cunning little brain. It's not even a good brain. Not good enough for anything really big. It wasn't much, was it?" I went on. "We only got five thousand each, but money was money then and there were so many things one could do with it."

"You got as much as I did." His tone was truculent. He was going to try to bluff it out.

"But I didn't make such good use of it as you did. You see, I don't really understand money." As I spoke I realized the truth of what I was saying. I didn't understand money. Henry did. He made it breed like livestock.

"I lost a lot of money at Melbourne," I continued. "That horse should have won, and there was a woman. She was very expensive

but she was worth it. She was very lovely."

"Slow horses and fast women," Henry said.

"Not at all," I said. "I like both fast. And then there was the schooner. She was a beauty. Sailed like a bird." I could almost feel the lift of her under me as I spoke. "The *Blue Shadow*, we called her. Of course we were in Japanese waters when they sank her, but I didn't lose a man."

"Why didn't you hire somebody to poach pearls for you?" Henry asked.

"Because that's where we're different," I said. "I do my own dirty work."

"I wonder how many wild-goose chases of yours I've financed," Henry whined.

I took some more brandy, holding the big glass between my cupped hands to warm it.

"Wonderful bouquet," I said, smelling it. "Wonderful, Henry."

"HOW much do you want this time?"

This was what I had been playing for. I had the concession. I could get the whole thing going for a couple of thousand pounds, the rest I could invest; if things went wrong, there were places where one could live like a king on a few hundred a year. One thing was certain, I was not coming home again. It was always a failure.

"Ten thousand pounds," the answer came, pat to my tongue.

"Ten thousand pounds? You must be mad!" Henry's voice rose shrilly. "Do you think I've worked all my life just to keep you loafing about in the sun?"

"It was raining, Henry. Do you remember the way it lashed down that night? The sergeant major told us he was missing. I was trying to remember his name the other day; it was Mac . . . something. Mac . . . Mac . . . Macrae. That was it—Sergeant Major Macrae. Funny how things come back to me," I added. "I can see it all."

"I don't know what you're talking about, James. I don't see. . . Of course it was raining."

"Oh, yes you do, and I'm glad you remember the rain. It was coming down like hell when Macrae told us he was missing. Actually he came to ask us if we knew where he was. I think he thought you might have sent him somewhere. Lord, how clearly I see it all. Macrae standing there, the water dripping from his mustache. He was wearing one of those long rubber ground-sheet capes and it shone whenever a shell burst near us, and the men were talking. 'Mr. Buchanan in?' 'Any of you chaps seen Mr. Buchanan?' 'Which one?' It was puzzling, there being three of us in the same company, but he was such a kid, and I suppose they thought we'd look after him. A natural assumption on their part. Baby Buchanan, the men called him."

Henry was sagging in his chair. He reached for more brandy.

"And then the search party. There were plenty of volunteers ready to go and look for Jeremy. Very popular, wasn't he? You took one lot, and I took another. We shouted, 'Jeremy . . . Jeremy,' and the men shouted, 'Mr. Buchanan . . . Sir.' Yes. Twenty-two years ago at this time we were out ploughing through the mud, cold, hungry, frightened—looking for our cousin . . . Really, Henry, I don't think ten thousand a lot."

"A lot! It's a fortune."

"A very modest one. Besides, you seem to forget that I saved your life that night."

"How did you save my life? When did you?"

"That's gratitude! But perhaps you didn't know I had."

"If I didn't know you as I do, I should say you were drunk."

"I drink but I never get drunk. At times a good head is a valuable asset. . . And that search party was funny in a way."

"Funny?"

"Yes. Do you want me to go on? I think some things. . . It's not a pretty story, but still you seem to have forgotten it." I lowered my voice. "You see, Henry, I was quite near you when you killed him," I said.

"I didn't! You know I didn't!"

"You never knew how near you were to death that night. How nearly I put a bullet through you."

"And why didn't you? My God, if you knew what I went through sometimes."

His cheeks were quivering.

"You saw him trying to get out of the shell hole," I went on. "His tin hat had slipped back and was hanging round his neck by a chin strap. I must have been pretty near you to have seen that, musn't I? Jeremy waved to you and said, 'Give us a hand, Henry.' And then you hit him with a pick handle. His face burst like a ripe tomato. You never carried a pick handle after that. That's what you see in your dreams, I expect, and the look in his eyes as he saw the blow coming. Yes, I saved your life that night. I had my pistol out but I didn't shoot you; it was cocked. I raised it and lowered it again. I remember thinking, 'What's the good . . . What good will it do?' And if I had been caught, they might have thought I'd done for you both; and besides, there was the money to consider. As you pointed out just now, we each got five thousand pounds."

"I deny it. The whole thing is a fabrication, a tissue of lies!" Henry snarled. "And what do you think you can do? Why, you fool,

no one will believe you if you tell them a story like that."

I raised my hand. "Don't get excited," I said. "When a man is as fat as you are, it's dangerous."

He subsided.

"You see. You've never had a day's illness, but at a word from me you're frightened. You'll go and see a doctor tomorrow. Blood pressure, apoplexy, a stroke. That's what you're thinking now, isn't it? I have given you an excellent example of suggestion. Listen," I went on, "while you've been in the city I've been about. Instead of the stock market, I've studied human nature. Cause and effect. Money was your god. Now call upon him to save you. Ten thousand pounds. You say, quite rightly, people won't believe me, but how will you know they don't. Whenever you come into a room and see people stop talking, or hear them whispering in a corner, you'll wonder. And then I thought of sending you messages, cables, I'd sign them Jeremy. I have people who would telephone to you. I've got you, Henry. Two months of it, and you'd be stark, staring mad."

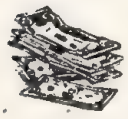
"This is blackmail."

"That was murder . . . but don't worry. I shan't hurt you, if you give me what I want. You're my golden goose, Henry, the goose that lays my golden eggs."

Through the open window came the sound of a sports car tearing round the square. I reached for another cigar. Pulling a candle toward me, I lit it, turning it round and round in my hand so that it would burn evenly.

"It's getting late," I said, "why don't you ring for your check book and a pen. Or shall I ring?"

I got up and went towards the fireplace. I could feel his eyes boring into my back. *If he were a man,* I thought, *he'd shoot me.*



TEN minutes later I left the house, nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine pounds richer than when I had entered it. I had given Frazer a pound. I wondered if Henry had even given anyone a pound. Probably not. He believed in people working for their money. It was good to get out of the house, to feel the pavements again, and to know that soon I should be out of it for good. After the first few weeks at home, it was always like this. England was so small, so neat, so tidy; and in London the people all looked flat and pale, like the things you found under a stone when you moved it.

Well, it wouldn't be for long now. I'd book a passage tomorrow. The *Mahattra* was sailing for Rangoon on the second. The Chief was a friend of mine. Next week I'd be at sea. Next month I'd be back.

"Hullo, Jim Buck," they'd say. "When did you get back?"

All the way home I thought of getting back. I opened the door of my lodgings. The same old smell of cabbage and linoleum met me. I went upstairs carefully, feeling for the banisters, wondering at the strange twists of fortune. Poor old Jeremy. He'd have been forty now, I thought, and how ineffectual Henry was. Why, he hadn't even killed Jeremy. Did he think one blow like that enough? If I hadn't finished him off, I thought, they'd have hung him. Henry had run on, not even able to wait to see what he had done. We had become separated from the others in the darkness. And I had hit him again and pushed him under. The mud of the Somme had closed over poor Jeremy.

I threw the rubies into the sandalwood box. I put my keys and the pocketbook with the check in it on the dressing table, and looked for my five-dollar piece. First in one pocket and then in another. It was not there. Had I left it at my brother's? Had it fallen onto the floor? Or had I lost it? But the check was there safe. If the gold piece were lost, it had served its turn. I thought of the girl who had given it to me.

"It will bring you luck, *señor,*" she'd said. "While you have it, things will go well."

It was fifteen years since I had left her. Looking back, things had gone well. I'd had more than my share.

I'll go back in the morning, I thought, *and see if it's turned up.*

In the morning. But in the morning I didn't go back. By the morning, things had changed.

Buchanan and Company was bust and had, from the papers, been bust for months. Henry had shot himself. So there had been a gun in the house.

I tore the check up slowly. I tore it across and across again. My luck was gone, but I'd still sail on the *Mahattra,* only not as a passenger. It was a pity the rubies weren't real, but still they'd fetch a few pounds. They were wonderful imitations. There was only one man who could make them and he was ready to buy them back. Yes, the golden goose was dead. I'd wrung its neck last night, but when I got back there were ways . . . I'd soon be back . . . "Hullo, Jim Buck, you back? Have a drink, Jim?" Things'd look better at the club with a gin pahit in my hand and the ice tinkling in the glass as I raised it. I wondered who'd get the embroideries that were made for Marie Antoinette and how much Henry's creditors would get?

If he'd had any guts I'd not be here, so maybe my luck's not so bad. . . *Poor Jeremy,* I thought, as I walked along the East India dock, *poor Jeremy must be laughing now. A great one to laugh was Jeremy*

ILLUSTRATED BY EDD ASHE

THE PEACEMAKER

By HUGH FULLERTON

The blow drove the legs of the McCue to the knees into the solid rock floor and all the kings dodged, expecting to be splattered with brains.

IT WAS the Doorleys' grandmammy's pappy, old Shano Murphy, who told me the tale when I was but a wee lad, and 'tis as true today as it was then. He was spreading fresh, pungent tanbark on the garden walk between the currants and the gooseberries, and I riding the barrow pretending it was a chariot. Between loads he sat in the barrow resting and

smoking and told me tales of the wars and the troubles in Ireland.

The greatest war Ireland ever knew, he said, was the one in which every one of the seven hundred and thirty-one kings was involved, and that was the one caused by Kitty Kelly making eyes. The odd king, finding no one to make war on, went home and started a civil war against his uncle Thomasheen, and both got killed. The way it happened, Shano said, was that Ireland was tired of war and wanted peace, and the kings met in council and learned that Kitty Kelly was to blame, so they voted that Kitty should be called before them and told to quit. Kitty came, laughing and gay and bewitching, and she started at once making eyes at the king who was reproving her, and she made eyes first at one then the other all 'round the table, until all the kings were battling on the floor and beating each other with drinking cups and starting three hundred and sixty-six new wars.

And that was the way things were going, Shano said, when Finn McCumhl, who was the greatest king of them all, brought the Peacemaker in and stopped them, and gave Ireland the longest peace she ever knew.

Finn was the greatest of all the kings, and the greatest man, not belittling George Washington, the world ever knew, Shano told me. He stood fourteen feet nine inches in his stocking feet and weighed nigh onto six hundred pounds, with never an ounce of fat on him. By Finn's time, Ireland was down to four hundred and eighty-three kings—because of some of them getting killed and some getting tired of being kings and quitting to tend the praties, and some letting their wives run their kingdoms, whilst they cut peat—and Finn he was the great king. When he went hunting he ran out the Giants' Causeway and lepped over into Scotland, and at dark he would come running down the mountains with a fat buck under each arm, and lep across to the Causeway running so fast he ran three miles before he could start slowing down.

All the other kings bowed down to Finn and feared him, although he was a man of peace and against fighting, and never went to war unless some other king poached his pheasant or his salmon. He carried a great gold-headed club with a blackthorn trunk for a handle. The head was fourteen inches across and it had eleven knobs, each the size of a walnut, and he called it the Peacemaker.

The wars that Kitty Kelly caused by making eyes kept all Ireland in a stew for ages, and finally Finn got tired of having to wade in with the Peacemaker and stop a war that bothered him, so he called a Peace Council and summoned all the kings to meet with him at Killybeg castle in Mayo, and all the kings came but a dozen or so whose wives wouldn't let them. When they had all gathered, Finn stood up swinging the Peacemaker between the thumb and two fingers of one hand whilst all the kings wondered, knowing that the club was so heavy it brought grunts from a strong man to lift it with both hands, and there stood Finn twirling at as a Kerry buck does a shillelagh.

Finn was a man of few words, and them plain. He told them all this warring and fighting had to stop, and if it didn't, he would step in and make peace, and with that he twirled the Peacemaker. And every king present hurried to say that what he wanted more than anything was peace, quiet and time to hoe the praties and cut the peat, and they all signed the peace. Finn feeling fine, thanked them all and lepped over into Scotland to go fishing and, before night, caught four big salmon and ate them all for supper.

The weather held fine and Finn went wandering through the Highland, eating two pheasants for breakfast, a lamb for dinner and a hare or two and three or four salmon for supper, and he was having so fine a time he was gone most of the summer, thinking all the while of the peace at home. But when the frost came, he lepped back across the sea, and he lit right in the middle of wars. The McGlincheys were fighting the Burkes, and the Dorgans and Geogans were battling and the Costigans were cutting the throats of the Gradys, and all over the land nothing but wars and ruins with the praties rotting in the fields and the pigs wandering the woods.

Finn was mad. He sent word for all the kings to come to him, but less than half of them did, for many were dead, many wounded and in hiding, and others too busy to come, what with trying to beat the brains out of their neighbors with clubs. When they were gathered, Finn came striding into the great hall swinging the Peacemaker and glaring at them till many trembled.

"I was after thinkin' I told you wars must stop," he said in awful tones.

"You did that," they confessed, shaking in the boots of them. "And we have tried hard to keep the peace, but the devil is in the people."

Finn looked all around the great hall and then asked, "Where is the McCue?"

"'Tis busy he is," they told him. "He has worked night and day to keep them from war, and him the greatest passyfist in all of Ireland."

"Then why isn't he here?" roared Finn. "I sent word special to him to come."

"'Tis too busy he is," said one of the Clonmel kings. "This day he is trying to prevent war between the Costigans and the O'Ryans."

"Tell the McCue to come," said Finn, roaring louder, "and to bring the Costigan and the O'Ryan with him. I'll be after hearing him make peace."

THE McCue was a big man, most as big as Finn, and he came in puffing and red in the face, and wet with sweat, and with him the Costigan and the O'Ryan.

"I'd have been first to welcome your honor," said the McCue, "had I not been so busy preventin' wars."

"Have you made the peace between the Costigans and the O'Ryans?" asked Finn, twirling the Peacemaker between the fingers of one hand.

"I'm hopin' to keep them apart," said the McCue, mopping his brow.

"I'm wantin' no war with the O'Ryan," said Costigan. "'Tis a good neighbor he has been to me."

"Nor did I ever want to fight the Costigan," said O'Ryan.

"'Tis grand news and new hopes you give me," said the McCue. "It rejoices me that you are friends."

"Why shouldn't we be?" asked the Costigan.

"Three hundred years ago," said the McCue, "the great great great grandther of the O'Ryan, five times removed, stole the two best peat pits in Kerry from the Costigans. And I feared—"

"Did they that?" asked the Costigan. "And have they them now? Three hundred year, cuttin' the best peat from my bogs—"

"Now, now, Costigan," said the McCue. "Don't be after forgettin' that ye are friends—and besides, you must know that the Costigan had cut the tails off seven of the O'Ryan cows."

"The domned scoundrel!" said the O'Ryan. "I always knew—"

"Now, now," said the McCue. "Forgive and forget. Remember ye are neighbors and pledged to peace."

"What is the next war you want to prevent?" asked Finn, quiet-like and twirling the Peacemaker.

"The wan between the Callahans and the O'Rourkes," said the McCue.

"'Tis no war with the Callahans I'm wantin'," said the O'Rourke. "'Tis busy I am with the pratie bugs and the hoein', without a war."

"Niver a bow string I'll be twangin' at the O'Rourke," said the Callahan. "'Tis peace we want."

"'Tis peace we are all after wantin'," said the McCue. "Callahan, ye must not be holdin' it against thim that wanst the O'Rourkes fired all the Callahan hayricks and burned four pigs."

"Did they thot?" demanded the Callahan angrily.

"They did," said the McCue, "but 'twor long ago and ye hold no grudges. Besides, they claimed the Callahan had stolen the O'Rourke's wife."

"I nivir trusted wan of thim," said the O'Rourke. "Kape your eyes off the women folk, Callahan."

"What is your next peace-making, McCue?" asked Finn.

"The O'Tooils and the Brosnans, yer honor," said the McCue.

"There is no reason for war between the two of us," said both kings as once.

"'Twas fearin' I was that wanst the Brosnan charged that the O'Tooil was robbin' the poor box, and thot the O'Tooil claimed the Brosnan informed on him to the English."

"We'll adjourn for lunch," said Finn.

When the kings came back from lunch, word came that the Costigans had marched to seize the peat pits of the O'Ryans, who were gathering men for battle; that the Callahans and the O'Rourkes were having a pitched battle on the downs; and that the Brosnans had ambushed the O'Tooils and had them corned on the bog. Every king in the hall was getting ready to take sides, and the McCue was running circles, pleading with them to keep the peace, when Finn, picking his teeth after eating a suckling pig or two, came in swinging the Peacemaker, and took his chair.

"'Tis a man of peace ye are after claiming to be, McCue?" he asked.

"I am the greatest passyfist Ireland iver knew," said the McCue proudly. "I have spent the life of me tryin' to stop wars."

"'Tis only peace ye want, is it McCue?" asked Finn.

"Everlastin' peace," said the McCue.

"Ye shall have it, McCue," said Finn.

With that, he swung the Peacemaker and brought the gold knobs of it down squarely on the head of the McCue. The blow drove the legs of the McCue to the knees into the solid rock floor and all the kings dodged, expecting to be splattered with brains. But only a cloud of bone dust filled the hall, for the McCue was solid to the neck.

"If any of you other kings want peace the way the McCue did," said Finn, swinging the Peacemaker, "I'll be glad to be after giving it to him the same way. I'm going fishing again, for the salmon are rising in the Tay, and when I come back I want peace myself."

And that was the beginning of the Long Peace, which lasted as long as Finn lived and was able to swing the Peacemaker.

"Where's Lawson?" asked the company commander, looking over the platoon, or what was left of it.

BLOOD AND GUTS

ILLUSTRATED BY JAMES SCHUCKER

AT EXACTLY 0600 the LCI's, jammed with men, began to plow their way toward the shore of the haze-covered island. The haze came from the pulverizing effects of the smoking, powerful naval guns and the bombs of the carrier-planes, which had smashed at least part of the enemy's beach defenses.

The first wave of troops was moving in to establish the beachhead.

There was a deadly uniformity about the troops in the landing craft. All of them looked alike. All of them were driven by the same purpose. All of them had the same mission to perform. All of them were trained combat troops.

Only Lawson was different.

He squatted on his haunches at the rear of the boat, mentally tabulating those differences that set him apart from the others. He was keenly aware of them. He, too, was wearing a steel helmet, but there was a cross painted on it. He wore a pistol belt, but only to support a canteen of water and a first-aid pouch. He was wearing a field pack, just like the others, but in addition to that, he wore two large kits slung around his neck by straps and hanging at his sides like millstones. Those pouches were crammed not with ammunition and hand grenades, but with dressings and roller bandages, idoine swabs and triangular bandages, tourniquets and still more bandages.

Lawson's eyes were on the troops, armed with rifles and Tommy guns, heavy-laden with ammunition and hand grenades. Lawson's thoughts were on their mission, their singleness of purpose.

Lawson was different. He could be killed, but he could not kill. He carried no weapons, even to defend himself. He did not have one problem, but many. Each man in his landing craft, he knew, was potentially his problem. It was his duty to keep them alive if they were wounded, to tag and mark them if they were killed.

Lawson envied the troops.

His face, as he crouched there in the boat, was set and somber, but otherwise expressionless. He did not look at the approaching shore, coming nearer and nearer. He did not think of the approaching combat, or of his own personal safety. He was thinking, not of what was going to happen, but of what had already happened. The whole picture was beginning to fall into place, like the jumbled pieces of a jig-saw puzzle. The biggest pieces were

By WILLIAM LANGER

still missing, though he expected to find them soon, now.

The nearer he came to shore, the further Lawson's mind receded into the past. The haze-enveloped island was like a gigantic screen in a drive-in theatre, and projected on it was his whole career in the Medics. . . .

LAWSON could hardly believe what the first sergeant was saying.

"You're shipping out, Lawson," he said. He cleared his throat and paused.

"Where?" Lawson asked.

"I'm not sure," said the first sergeant, hesitantly. "But I think it's to a medical training battalion . . ."

"The medics!" There were tears of rage and bitterness and frustration in his eyes. "After three years in the Army, they send me to the medics . . ."

The first sergeant spread his hands helplessly.

In a few days, Lawson was shipped from one end of the country to the other. Overnight, he ceased being an M. P. and became a medic.

Lawson's bitterness increased in the first weeks of his training. He was given basic again, the same old close-order drill, the same old road marches, rifle marksmanship, bivouacs. He was being treated like a new recruit. He squirmed and griped and squirmed again until he had managed to achieve a negative sort of adjustment, that resignation to the inevitable that army discipline brings about in a man, sooner or later. Slowly, painfully, Lawson felt himself being molded to fit a new duty, because the army could not find a duty that would fit him. The job was not an easy one, but when it was finished, it was fairly complete, fairly definite.

Lawson's viewpoint about the medics began to undergo a change while he was taking his eight weeks of medical basic. Here was stuff he had never had before in the army. He studied anatomy and physiology. He learned about Materia Medica and drugs. He rolled and practiced bandaging hour after weary hour, from the simple circular to the more complicated Valeapu and Spica and Barton. He put on the highly complicated Army Leg Splint and Thomas Arm Splint until he yearned for the blessed relief of an hour of drill. His back ached as he carried a stretcher, burdened with a simulated patient, over litter obstacle courses. He studied about wounds and shock and infection and bleeding and how to treat them all. He learned how to find the arterial pressure points in the body blindfolded. He found out how to administer plasma, even under the crudest and most primitive field conditions. He learned the symptoms of a wide variety of sicknesses and diseases to which soldiers were most vulnerable. He felt like screaming whenever he heard an instructor repeat that his job was "to maintain the strength of the armed forces."

The hammering, constant repetition of this training seeped into Lawson's mind inevitably. He learned and learned and practiced and practiced until he felt that he knew enough. But the practice went on and on, seemingly without end.

"Your practice," an instructor told him when he complained at the endless monotony and grind of the training, "provides a basis for the coming of actual experience. Your theoretical learning is a necessary background for your practice. One is useless without the other —and there can never be too much of either . . ."

Lawson's training made him think, too. In spite of the galling repetition of the training, Lawson did not miss the overtone of urgency behind the words of his instructors. They were taking their time about the training, but it was only to save more time later—and more than time alone.

New ideas, new perspectives about the work of the medics unfolded before Lawson. The breadth and scope and responsibility of evacuating casualties as quickly as possible, with a minimum loss of life, dawned on him, overwhelmed him with its importance. The realization that he was dabbling with life and death, awakened Lawson to his own inadequacies, his lack of preparation. He trembled when he thought of it. And many a night he awakened from a restless sleep, disturbed by haunting dreams verging on nightmares, of a human life lost because of his carelessness, of a human limb lost because of his ignorance.

Lawson stopped being ashamed of being in the medics. Another emotion took its place in his heart—Lawson became afraid of being in the medics . . .

* * *

LAWSON stood in front of his company commander's desk. He saluted. The officer returned his salute. The first sergeant looked up from a sheaf of papers in his hands.

"This is Pfc. Lawson," said the first sergeant. "He wanted to see you about getting a transfer to some other branch of the Service."

The company commander looked at Lawson keenly.

"Is that true, Lawson?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Lawson.

"Why?" asked the company commander. "Don't you like the medics?"

Lawson cleared his throat. "That isn't it, exactly, sir," he said. "When I first came here, I hated the medics. I was ashamed to write to my friends what I'd been transferred to. I never wore a cap with the medical braid after duty hours. But I'm not ashamed now. . ."

The officer looked puzzled. "Then why do you want to leave now?"

Lawson's voice was hoarse. "There's too much responsibility in the medics. I'll be taking care of our own men. I'm not prepared for it. . ."

"You've had training. . ."

"That's true," said Lawson. "But I don't think it's enough to give me the right to play around with other men's lives. I'm no doctor, sir. . ."

"You're not expected to be a doctor," the company commander answered him. "We're training you to give emergency medical treatment to our wounded until they can be sent to the rear for expert medical attention. That's all."

"It may be simple to you, sir," said Lawson. His voice was harsh and strained. "It's not so simple to me. I never harmed a hair on anybody's head. Why, every time I think that maybe a man's life may be lost because I made a mistake, or didn't know enough, it makes me sweat and shiver. I don't think I have the guts to do it, sir."

The company commander drummed on the desk with his pencil, surveying Lawson's set, serious face, his intense brown eyes, in which there was an honest and urgent plea.

The company commander looked down at his pencil.

"Lawson," he said, "it's moments like these which makes things very hard for me. Yet there's only one way for me to act. . ."

He paused and looked directly into Lawson's eyes.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I consider your reasons for desiring a transfer insufficient. Your request is denied."

Lawson saluted and left the office without another word.

As the door closed behind Lawson's bowed and drooping shoulders, the officer looked at the first sergeant.

"Training pays off," he said, "and Lawson is fine proof of it."

"Yes, sir," said the first sergeant, a shade of doubt in his voice, however.

"Whatever else we've taught him," the officer continued, "our biggest achievement is the sense of responsibility we've instilled in him about the importance of his work."

"He calls that responsibility fear," said the first sergeant.

"A natural mistake. He also calls his lack of actual experience a lack of guts."

"He should make a fine medic," said the first sergeant.

"He will," the company commander nodded in agreement. "On the battlefield, Lawson will find the blood of his buddies flowing in rivers. And Lawson will suddenly discover the guts to stem that flow . . ."

WHEN Lawson's training was finished, he was assigned to an infantry division as a company aid man. There were two others with him. Each one of them was assigned to a platoon.

Lawson's life thereafter centered completely around his platoon. He lived with them, he ate with them, he learned to know them all well, because he was always studying them. He knew that sometimes in the future the time he spent studying them would be of great help.

But during this time he never came to know them intimately, not as they knew each other. At every attempt he made, Lawson realized there was a subtle cleavage between him and the men, never expressed in so many words, but still there. It dawned on Lawson that although he was always with them, he was not actually *of* them yet. He knew that it was not only because they wore the blue infantry braid on their caps, and he wore the maroon braid of the medics. He knew it was not because they did not appreciate the work he did. Lawson went on all their marches with them, on all their obstacle courses, their tactical problems, maneuvers. He worked just as hard, and when the end of the day came around, he was just as tired as any of them. But when the end of the day came, and the weary troops rested on their bunks, Lawson was still busy fixing blisters.

Yet there was something lacking. Lawson tried again and again to bridge the gap existing between him and the troops. He knew they all liked him personally. They all came to him when they needed him. But at every attempt Lawson made to get even closer to them, he realized he was butting his head against a stone wall.

Bitterly, Lawson realized that although the troops called him "Doc," they didn't mean it.

Lawson at first blamed himself for it, his own personal make-up. But he soon discovered that other medics were facing the same thing.

Lawson wanted to know the reason why. He could not rest until he had discovered that reason. He could not figure it out himself, no matter how hard he tried.

So Lawson went to the commander of the infantry company and put his cards on the table.

When he had finished, the officer, who had seen him many times without ever noticing him, looked at Lawson with a new light in his eyes. There was genuine respect in that look.

"Lawson," he said, "I'm proud of the fact that you have been assigned to my company."

"That doesn't answer my problem, sir," said Lawson, thinking that here again was the same evasion, the same beating around the bush.

"I want the truth, straight from the shoulder."

"I'll give you the truth, Lawson," said the officer. "These men have been training as a team for eventual combat. Every man knows that each one of the team has a definite place, a definite spot; that the lives of all of them may depend on any one of them. As essential members of a team, where the stakes will be life and death, they have grown to trust each each implicitly."

The officer paused. Lawson laughed, involuntarily. There was bitterness in that laugh —bitterness and pain, too.

"In other words, sir," he said, his voice steady, but husky with emotion, "you mean they don't trust me?"

The commander shook his head in emphatic denial.

"I mean nothing of the kind, Lawson," he said. "These troops are training for battle. But they've never been in battle yet, just like you. However, their training has imbued them with a certainty of each man's importance to the functioning of the team as a whole. They have no experience behind them to prove your importance to the team in combat. They are not sure of you yet, Lawson."

Everything became clear to Lawson. He did not blame the troops for not feeling sure of him. How could he, when deep down in his heart, Lawson was not even sure of himself?

"How can I make them sure of me?" Lawson asked.

The officer spread his hands helplessly.

"I wish I could help you," he said, "but I'm afraid there's nothing you can do about it here. On the battlefield, however, it'll be a different story. Blood and guts will bring both of you close together. Their blood and their guts and your guts . . ."

As he left the office, Lawson wondered if he would ever get close to the troops. For to him, the overwhelming sensation he felt was still fear, lack of courage coming from lack of experience.

THE landing boats containing the first wave of troops stopped a few yards offshore. The ramps came down, and the troops flowed out like a cataract, wading for the grayish, sandy beach.

Lawson brought up the rear of his platoon. That was his post—he always brought up the rear. During the training period, Lawson was always behind the last straggler, ready to treat his blisters. Soon he would be called on to treat other things . . .

Lawson shuddered as he waded the last few yards toward the beach. He held his first-aid kits high, so that they would not get wet. It was a shudder of fear, but it was a fear that went even beyond personal safety. Lawson was on his own now. He knew that the third wave of troops would be followed by a battalion aid station, a doctor, litter-bearers. But until they arrived, Lawson was alone. The lives of the troops were in his hands.

He looked at his hands as he waded through the water. He wondered if they would prove capable enough. They felt warm, even hot. There was an electric tingle to them. Lawson was sure that if they were not holding the first-aid kits they would be trembling.

Lawson had always wondered how it would feel to climb onto a hostile shore, without a weapon with which to defend himself against the enemy. But now that factor did not seem so important. The troops were ahead of him. They looked terribly solid and strong as they waded out of the water and onto the sand. They were like a wall, screening Lawson from the enemy.

But Lawson knew they were not an impenetrable wall. That was why he was with them. His job was to mend the human wall before him.

The wall kept moving onto the beach.

The hail of enemy fire Lawson had expected did not materialize. The naval and air bombardment had forced the enemy from the beach, deeper inland. Now he was biding his time in the jungle, several hundred yards from the beach.

The troops kept going, silently, inexorably, heading straight for the strip of thick jungle. Lawson followed. His blood pounded like thunder in his veins, his breath came in loud, wheezing gusts. As they covered more and more distance, Lawson hoped that there might be no opposition on the island, that the enemy might have fled or been wiped out. Perhaps, after all, the lives of his platoon would not be in his hands, even for a short while. Lawson hoped and prayed, and hoped and prayed again.

But deep down in his heart, Lawson knew that he was only kidding himself.

The Japs launched their attack when the troops were no more than fifty yards from the jungle, just ascending a little rise in the land. They launched the attack with a hail of mortar, machine-gun and rifle fire that suddenly transformed the quiet morning into a screaming inferno.

The order was given to fall back behind the slope and dig in, quickly, while they still enjoyed slight cover. Every man unbuckled his entrenching tool, and began to dig a foxhole.

Everyone was digging but Lawson.

Lawson was busy. He was crawling over the rise to reach the man who had failed to fall back with the others.

Lawson's action was instinctive, automatic. Had he stopped to think, he would never have summoned the courage to do it. But the thun-

der of the firing was too loud to encourage much thinking.

His transition from all the many weary months of training and practice to action was not gradual. It was not meant to be, he realized. It just came, somehow.

He crawled toward the man lying on the ground, right in the teeth of the enemy fire. He reached the man and bent over him. He felt his pulse. He saw the bullet hole in his chest. He saw the blood that had seeped through his clothing.

Lawson knew the man. It was Maxwell, who always got blisters on a march. Lawson knew that Maxwell would never suffer from blisters again. Maxwell was dead.

When Lawson returned to the troops, they were still digging. All of them looked up at him, the same unspoken question in each pair of eyes.

Lawson said nothing. He just looked at them. They read the answer in his eyes, and returned to their digging.

Lawson started to dig a foxhole, too. He was no privileged character, he knew. There are very few of them in combat. He was not immune to enemy bullets. He was just a medic. And a medic going with the troops into battle had to dig his own foxhole.

There were some for whom Lawson could do nothing.

ALL that day and all that night, the enemy tried to dislodge the troops. The hail of fire from both sides never stopped. Several times the Japs charged, but were driven back with heavy losses. The beachhead was securely established, but the enemy was strongly entrenched in the jungle. The command had decided to let them spend some of that strength before trying to dislodge them from the jungle.

Lawson was busy. He was working.

The Japs were not the only ones suffering losses. More than once their mortars created havoc among the troops.

Lawson did not spend much time in his foxhole. He was too busy crawling from one foxhole to another, treating casualties. The calls for "Doc" were mounting. He went to each one as fast as he could.

Lawson had been clumsy at first in bandaging the wounds, in stopping the bleeding, in splinting legs and arms, in binding up sucking wounds of the chest, in temporarily fixing broken jaws so that the victim would not choke to death. But Lawson was the only one who knew his clumsiness. To his patients he was more expert than the greatest doctor in the world.

After each succeeding casualty, he felt himself grow in proficiency, in confidence. The frantic calls of "Doc" that came from the troops made him speed up his work. And he was no longer working alone. Litter-bearers were taking his casualties away almost as fast as he was treating them. His kits were getting lighter and lighter.

There were some, like Maxwell, for whom Lawson could do nothing . . .

As the night progressed, fatigue was overcoming Lawson. But he held on grimly. He could not find the time to rest, so he did not rest. All of them were taking a terrible pounding. But they had to endure it—it was their job. It was part of the plan for this operation.

Lawson was smoking in his foxhole. It was the first smoke in hours, the first rest in hours. He inhaled the smoke greedily, trying to consume it quickly. He could not tell how long he'd be able to rest. He was afraid to rest. He might fall asleep, and he could not afford to fall asleep.

Litter-bearers were taking his casualties away almost as fast as he was treating them.

"Doc!"

The voice came from several yards away, following a burst of rifle fire.

Lawson ground out the cigarette and crawled out of his foxhole. Guided by the wounded man's voice, he reached the other's trench. He let himself down. He covered the hole with his raincoat and turned on his flashlight.

Blood was seeping through the shirt on the man's upper arm. The man's face was working

with pain. Tears of agony were in his eyes.

Lawson cut the sleeve away with his knife, exposing the wound. It was a compound fracture of the humerus. The bone jutted out of the wound, like the jagged edge of a saw dipped in blood. The arm dangled at the man's side, limp, useless, deformed.

Lawson took hold of the man's arm and exercised a gentle pull until it straightened out. The man groaned, but there was nothing else Lawson could do. He applied pressure just above the wound. The bleeding stopped. Then he put in a sterile dressing and, using the wounded man's bayonet, he improvised a splint. He planted him in as comfortable a sitting position as possible.

He took the man's canteen and opened it. He handed it to the man. Then he started to feed him the sulfa tablets that came in his first-aid pouch.

"Wash them down with plenty of water," said Lawson. The man gulped the water down greedily.

Lawson patted the man's shoulder soothingly.

"Take it easy now, Jackson," he said. "You'll be all right. I'll have a couple of litter-bearers here in a jiffy."

"I'll do what you say, Doc," said the man simply.

"That's the right spirit, son," said Lawson.

"Doc . . ."

The pain-filled cry penetrated the night.

"I've got to leave now," said Lawson, putting out the light. "Somebody's calling me out there . . ."

"Go ahead, Doc. I'll be all right. But you better take care of yourself. We need you . . ."

Lawson crawled to the next foxhole. His face was beaded with sweat. His back ached. His knees burned from hours of crawling. His palms were still sticky from blood.

But Lawson was happy. In his ears the voice of the man he had just left rang like the beautiful notes of an organ.

"Watch yourself, Doc. We need you . . ."

Lawson knew he had done his job. He realized that he had finally bridged the gap separating him and the troops. He was one of them. He was a member of the team. They were sure of him now. Lawson was sure of himself now, too. Lawson crawled faster . . .

EARLY the next morning Lawson's company was withdrawn back to the beach. Other troops took their places in the foxholes. Still others opened an attack on the jungle.

Lawson went to the rear with his troops and went to sleep instantly. Most of the others in his platoon followed his example.

Only two men were awake when the company commander came over to the platoon.

"Where's Lawson?" asked the officer.

"Sleeping," said the second man, pointing.

The first man raised his voice. "Hey, Doc. The captain wants to talk to you."

"Shut up, you jerk," said the second man. "Let Doc sleep. He's all in."

"It's all right," said Lawson, waking. "Anything wrong?"

"No," said the captain. "I just got word from the ship. All but two of our wounded will live . . ."

"Thanks to Doc," said the first man.

The second man nodded emphatically.

The captain looked at Lawson and smiled. Lawson smiled back.

"It wasn't as hard as you thought it would be, was it?" the captain asked.

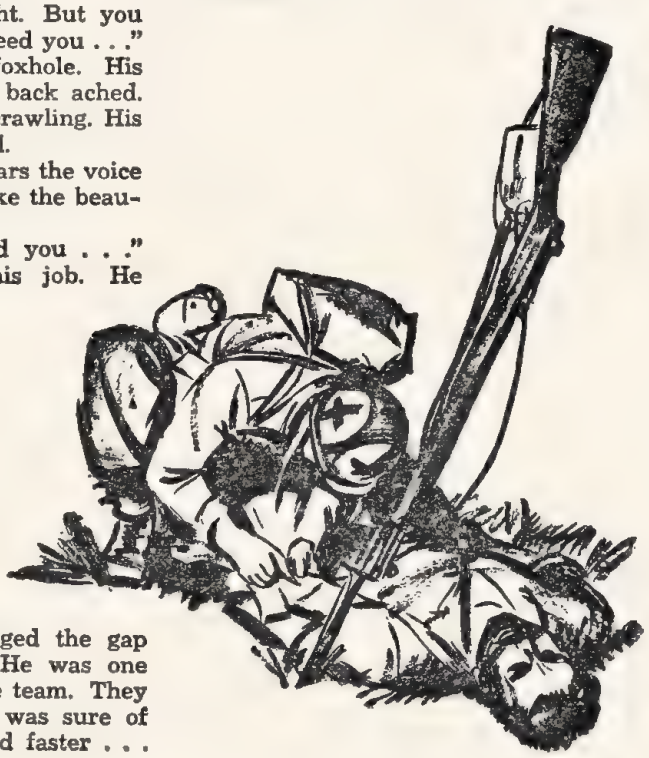
"No," said Lawson, stretching out again. "It was like answering the chow whistle."

The captain smiled down at him.

"Their guts and their blood," mumbled Lawson, relaxing dreamily.

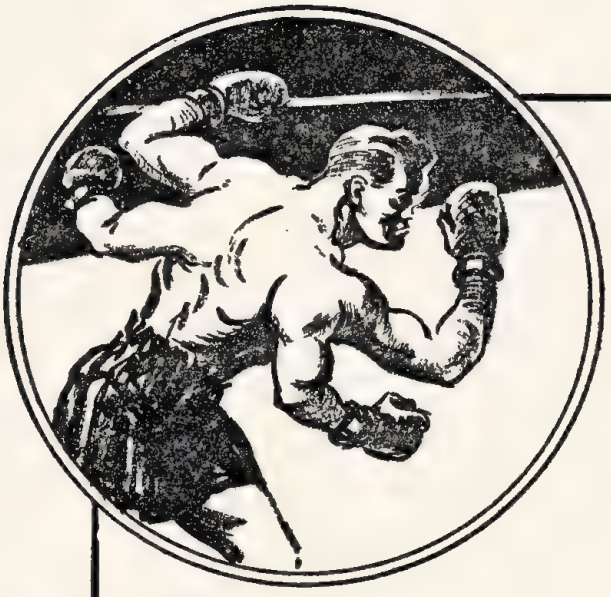
"And your guts, too," said the captain.

Lawson did not hear him. Lawson was sleeping again.



Lawson cut the sleeve away with his knife, exposing the wound.

ILLUSTRATED BY
J. CAMPBELL FARREN



YOU AIN'T GONNA BELIEVE THIS

By
LAWTON FORD

ORDINARILY, understand, I don't pay any attention to guys who want to tell me their life story, but this fellow in Harry's that night was different. I was the only one in the place outside of Harry when he came in and crawled up on a stool near me.

Harry gave him a 'ball, and the guy's hands shook so much that he spilled half of it on his vest. He downed three in a couple of minutes and squatted there gasping and shaking and mumbling to himself.

Harry never opens his trap to ask questions, but I had to find out what it was all about. This fellow was almost crying, and he didn't even look up when I asked him who's chasing him. He muttered something about his being the unluckiest guy on earth and always getting the lousy breaks.

"You ain't gonna believe this, but it's Gawd's truth! This guy I find has four arms!"

"I gotta tell somebody," he gasps. "You never heard nothing like this. You ain't gonna believe it."

I told Harry to give us a couple of 'balls, and this guy gulped his nervously. He's a medium-size guy, about thirty-five, thirty-seven, plain-looking, dark suit, no hat, and a lock of mouse-colored hair falling over his squinty eyes. He's got a regular beak nose and needs a shave. Outside of that, he looks like any other guy in a bar on Third Avenue. He lights one butt after another, leaving the pack on the bar in front of him. He has big hands and big knuckles. Every few minutes he takes the butt out of his mouth and rubs his nose with his knuckles. His name is Artie.

He tells me he used to be a fighter years ago and wound up in St. Paul working for a fellow owned a gym out there.

"I am up north for a few weeks last summer," this guy goes on, "when I meet this monstrosity. . .You ain't gonna believe this, but I'll tell you anyway. It's Gawd's truth! This guy I find has got four arms!"

Artie knuckled his nose and dragged deep on a butt. I looked around to make sure there wasn't any gang of ribbers come in to enjoy watching a gag played on me. Harry isn't paying any attention down the bar, except to flick a glance at our glasses now and then. Artie doesn't look at me but he seems like he's waiting for me to say something. I don't.

"Well," he continues, "I see this fella at a farm near the Canadian border—this side. He's doing something with a pitchfork and some hay. He looks like he's all arms. He is a young punk, maybe sixteen, seventeen, tall . . . nice build. His name is Danny. I gets talking to this kid and he tells me lotsa people think he should go with a circus as a freak, but he don't see that. He figures he's better than normal people, not a freak!

"He's got four arms, all right, two on each shoulder. He is only using two to make with the hay, so the other two"—Artie gulps a little Scotch restorative—"the other two he's got . . . got clasped behind him! I tell you, it kinda gets you to see it."

"This kid's arms, his front arms, are just like anybody's. Regular normal arms. He's wearing an athletic shirt and khaki shorts so I could see everything. His back arms—I mean the ones behind—was just a little shorter, and a little slimmer. Not skinny or crippled, just a little smaller. The hands is regular. Every now and then while we are talking, he hikes up his shorts with his extra hands, or mops his face with a bandanna, but he don't need to stop with the hay. He keeps right on tossin', all four arms busy.

"The shoulders is thick and heavy, but with plenty of muscle. He's got nice biceps in the front arms, and a good forearm. Being an expert, I notice all this while he's tossin' the hay up on a wagon.

"Well, the pay-off is, I sell him on the idea of him being a fighter. Think of it—a fighter with four arms! Four good arms!" Artie finally looked at me, and I saw that his nerves were pitiful. His eyes were twitching and there was a little muscle dancing in his cheek.

Harry put up two more 'balls. Artie made a sour face as he held it under his nose. "How many's this?" he asked. "I don't feel a thing." I know better than to count any man's drinks, so Artie goes on.

"If it was raining Scotch, I'd be out in it with a sieve, as the fella says," he groaned. "When I think of the opportunities that boy had!"

"What's the matter? Couldn't he take it?" I asked.

"Oh, no. The boy could handle himself, and he didn't back up in the ring," allowed Artie. "But, well, we never had the breaks. I trained him good. I didn't dare take him back to St. Paul to train, so we worked out at his home for awhile. His ma and pa thought that Danny had ought to get out and make some dough for himself, so it was okay by them. We work out for a couple of months, and anyway Danny is in pretty good shape to begin with. I figure his two extra arms is as good as a thousand lessons. Anyway, I can't wait to see the looks on guys' faces when I spring him in the ring.

"This Danny is six foot two, a hundred and eighty-seven stripped. Good jaw. A redhead . . . nice looking kid, sorta happy looking, and it's a fact nothin' don't ever bother him. He's alla time kidding around and playing jokes on guys he knows.

"I ask him about dames. He knows plenty round and about, but he's kinda shy on account of they're all afraid of him and won't let him mess about very much. I figure I don't have to worry too much on that point.

"WELL, we make St. Paul and Danny walks through his first half-dozen bouts. The first time in the ring, his opponent and the referee like to fall over. Danny has his robe over his shoulders, and of course no one can see his arms. Then I pull off the robe and show him. Litvak Kelly—that's Danny's opponent—he just stands there with his chin between his knees. The ref looks wild. The crowd goes crazy. Before the match, I send word to have an extra set of gloves on hand and I have taped up all his hands.

"Well, they had to drag out the official rules book and everybody has his say. But there is no rule in the book says Danny can't fight, so the bout commences. Kelly gets some of his nerve back and walks out looking like he

wishes he is going the other way. I guess his manager tells him the two extra arms is probably useless or phony.

"They shake hands—Danny uses his front ones, while his back ones is limbering up. Kelly's face is worth a grand just to see it. The noise in the clubhouse is terrific. Kelly starts out with a left jab and he tries it every few seconds, hoping to be quick enough to catch Danny cold before he gets started. But Danny don't even need his extra arms. He pokes Kelly upstairs and down for awhile and amuses the crowd by pulling up his trunks every now and then or scratching his back with his back arms. The paying customers love it, especially since Danny shows he don't need the extra arms to put Kelly away.

"Danny gets a laugh by shadow-boxing in one direction with his front arms and in the other direction with his back arms. Kelly just stands there with his mouth open.

"Just once Danny lets go with all four, ticking off points on Kelly so fast the judges can't count 'em. Kelly sinks back and tries to cover up, but Danny hits him so often and in so many places it is like fighting an octopus. Once Danny leans on the ropes with his back arms, his legs crossed, looking like he is waiting for the fight to begin, and all the time he is pasting Kelly hard rights and lefts with his good front arms. Believe me, we certainly give the customers their money's worth!

"Danny had nice footwork. I take special care to see that he can 'ride a bike', as the fella says, in case he gets up against some slugger that can punch his way inside Danny's four-arm guard. So it is easy for Danny to skip around Kelly and let him have it from all sides. Kelly don't know where or when to duck. Sometimes he gets it from front and back at the same time.

"Two rounds of this and I give Danny the office to finish it. I don't want to give the crowd too much all at once. So Danny gets Kelly dizzy and lets go a hard left to the button and a right downstairs that folds Kelly in two. A right cross straightens him out and lays him away. Danny belongs to the crowd. It takes us two hours to get away.

"Maybe you think I am sitting pretty with a boy like that. My luck don't hold. We get six-seven matches and those rats come up with a special rule. The athletic council writes a new rule in the books—no fighter can use more than two gloves. That lets Danny out, because, of course, he can't have bare knuckles on any of his hands. Sure, we could be kept on, Danny just using his two front arms, but that is being a freak in his book and he don't want any part of it. So it is curtains for our ring career just when we begin to hit the big dough."

Artie slobbers over another 'ball and sighs. "That ain't anything to the kind of luck I got," he moans. "We make a few bucks off the fights, but it ain't all gravy. For example, to give you an idea of what kind of luck I got, leave me tell you a few things that cost me dough.

"We come to New York City because I got an idea where we can clean up quick. Well, here's what happens in a few days. First, Danny wants to keep in shape, so I take him to O'Brien's gym. First day there, Danny gets to punching the bag and he gives it a good workout with all he's got. So what? So he tears the bag offa the frame. Then he punches the dummy, and a guy what's holding a hundred-an'-fifty-pound bar-bell over his head gets so surprised at seeing Danny wallop with all four that he drops the weight and it goes through the floor. Then we clear out. It costs me three seventy-five for the bag and twenty bucks for the floor.

"So another time we're in Mindel's Department Store and Danny stands up against a counter. His front arms is in the sleeves of his coat and the back arms are hanging loose under his coat. Being a little shorter, they don't show. Danny stands with his front arms clasped behind him and his short ones reach out and cop four neckties offa the counter. That don't cost me anything extra because I raise the roof when he tells me about it and I pay for the ties and have them wrapped up. I don't stand for no pinching stuff—no penny-ante pinching.

"I hustle Danny back to my uncle's house in Brooklyn. We go by BMT. Ever ride on the BMT about five-thirty? I told you Danny don't fool much with dames, but it's because they're afraid of him, not that he don't shine up to them. We're wedged in the crowd. I can't even move. Danny is hanging on a handle with one arm, a newspaper in the other. The short ones is still hanging under his coat.

"I should of been on the watch-out, but I guess I am too busy figgering out the play for the big dough. So pretty soon a cute little trick near us gives a yelp and raises her handbag up to swing on somebody. Danny is nearest—but Danny's arm is up. All the rest of the people squeezed in around us is dames. There I am sweating for fear somebody will tumble to the bulge in Danny's coat on each side where his other arms is, or he'll move 'em and give us away, when—bam! I get a handbag alongside my kisser! I should of had my hands up, too, if I am smart. But I learned. Everytime I ride like that with Danny I have them both hanging from a strap after that.

"IT TAKES me time to line up our play for our next move, and meanwhile Danny goes about enjoying himself. He goes to taxi dancehalls, rides on the roller coaster and goes swimming at Coney, makes a

few dates when he can, and in general has himself one hell of a good time.

"Once he picks up fifty bucks in a wrestling match in East New York, but he says that wrestlers is worse than freaks. He even admits that he had to lose the match to make the fifty.

"Well, I am finally set with the crowd at the Wrenfell Hotel. I've got two beautiful sets of African Dominoes and an 'in' with Albie the Traveller. Albie organizes the biggest and fastest dice games in Manhattan. They play seven nights a week—never in the same place. The play is way up in the high brackets. Nobody ever rolls the dice for less than a grand, and some fellas fade bets of five and ten grand regular. Side bets is always five hundred or a grand."

Artie's shakes had let up some and he was quieter, but he was still moaning and groaning. "The chance of a lifetime!" he says. "I coached Danny for a week. He gets so he can switch them dice from a front hand to a back hand without even me seeing it. We rig up a strap under his coat to brace his short arms just above the elbow, so's they couldn't move and give him away. All that he has to move are the fingers of his back right arm, changing dice from one hand to the other. These special dice never throw a seven. All we have to do is wait for one night when the set of house dice they are using look like the specials I give Danny. We can make twenty grand on a turn, and that's all we have to risk—one chance at the table. Do that a few times spaced about a week apart and we are set. That's what I thought!

"It takes us about five nights of hanging around before Albie throws a pair of dice that just match in color and size the ones Danny has been carrying all along. So I give Danny the office to stand in. He does, and when he gets the turn he bets a grand of the money I round up for this play. His point is a five—with the house dice—and Danny switches. He makes his point easy on the third throw. One grand he wins and I cash a side bet of seven hundred. His next point is an eight, again using the house dice. He switches and makes it first throw. This time we take twenty-five hundred. Danny switches back and cops a seven. The bank roll is going up fast."

Artie's twitch had come back and his face muscles were dancing. He shook worse than ever. I told Harry to make it a double this time but it didn't quiet Artie much. He slobbered so bad and was crying so much I couldn't tell whether it was Scotch or tears drooling down his vest. He clenched his big hand and rubbed his nose. "My luck!" he muttered, pounding the bar. "My luck!" After a minute he grit his teeth and went on.

"Dames is dames!" he ground out. "Whether they is chippies in the BMT or if they run a big dice game. Albie is standing at Danny's left. Why in hell she couldn't of stood at his right, I don't know. Danny is a nice kid—but he's a kid. He ain't got no idea of what this means. He's rolling again and the bank roll is over ten grand. A few more times and we're through for the night with a nice sock. But no. No! Danny has got to go and move his left arm —the one outside his coat, his front arm. Albie imitates a yodeler. She jumps a foot, mad as a hornet.

"Since Danny's back arm is braced, he couldn't even have done it with one that was outta sight. He gets so used to getting away with it that he pinches first and thinks afterward."

Artie practically broke down and sobbed, with his mousy hair in a puddle on the bar. His back was heaving and quivering, his hands were trembling.

"What happened then?" I had to prompt him for fear Artie would collapse completely. He pulled himself together a little and braced his hands against the bar. He tried to make his answer sound casual.

"Oh, nothing," he said. "Nothing, only Albie hauls off and smacks Danny with a backhand right that knocks him off balance and floors him. Being slugged like that, Danny drops the house dice—and the special dice, too, and puts his good right hand to his jaw. Lying that way on his back his two short arms are in full sight under his coat. Oh, nothing happens—only Danny is worked over by seven guys and one dame, and I get a smaller dose of the same. We wind up behind two ashcans in Shubert Alley. I haven't even got a dime for a BMT ride to Brooklyn!" Artie completely folded and laid over the bar. His shoulders twitched and his hands hung like dead mackerel over the back of the bar. I wasn't sure he was still conscious, but I had to hear the rest of his story.

One thing I had to know. I ordered a couple more doubles—one for me and one for Artie. I put my hand on Artie's shoulder and shook him gently. Harry set the doubles down between us. I held Artie's head back and slid one under his nose. His eyelids fluttered open and he tried to sit up. He was groggy but not quite out.

"Artie," I begged, "tell me. What happened to Danny? What's he doing now?"

Artie clutched at the 'ball. He held his head up with difficulty, tears flowing down the sides of his nose.

"He's lost!" he gasped. "Lost! He married a Brooklyn girl last month. He lives in Flatbush. He works!" Artie's eyes opened for a moment, full of horror. "He works in a change booth. He slaps out nickels in an Automat!"

With a thud Artie's head met the bar and he was still. I stole quietly out to the bustle and noise of Third Avenue.

The Shadow of a Mountain

ILLUSTRATED BY RAY BETHERS

By WILLIAM ARTHUR BREYFOGLE

I OFTEN wonder whether Schmidt tells this story, too, and, if he does, where he places the emphasis. The probability is that he has put it out of his mind, as being one of those annoying things that do not lend themselves to rational explanation but, at least, are not likely to happen twice. To me, however, what is important is that it did happen once, and I was there to see it. There is nothing about it that I want to forget.

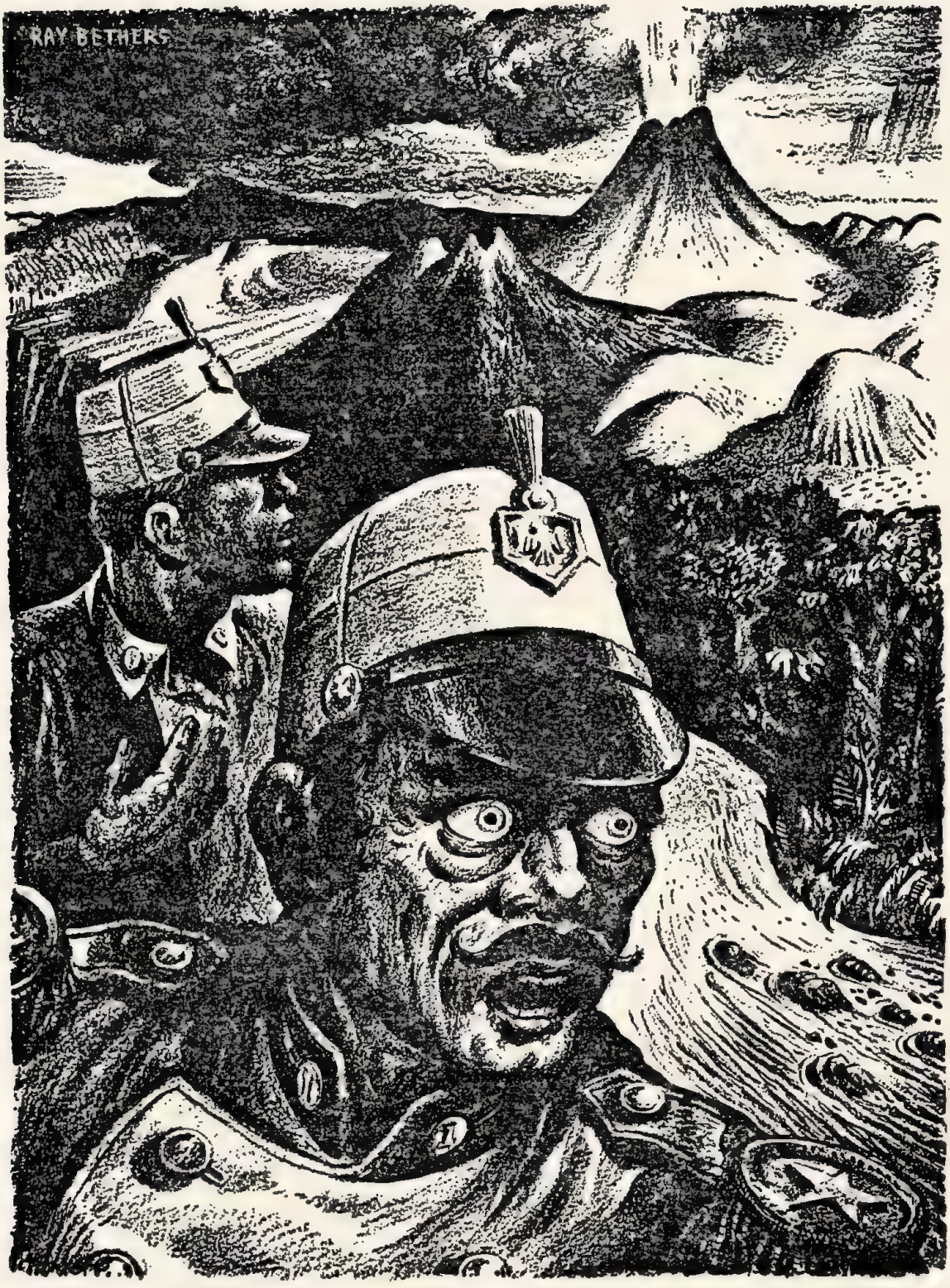
It began as a rumor, and the rumor took me from Puerto Grande, on the coast, up to a place called Rio Oro, in the hills. In that picturesque, uneasy republic, nearly everything began as a rumor, and, since anything was possible, it was not safe for a conscientious correspondent to ignore any report, however wild. I caught the night train from Puerto Grande. The train was an hour late in starting.

You may think it sentimental, but I was depressed. The rumor was ugly and alarming, and, after twenty years among them, I had more than an observer's interest in these people. They did rash and ill-considered things, but they contrived to do them without alienating my sympathy. They were brave and generous, and they never paused to consider what those qualities might cost them. The briefest way to put it was that they were, in all essential things, the antithesis of Johann Schmidt.

Schmidt has a good deal to do with the story. I fell to thinking about him while the train ran fast and straight across the level coastal plain. A pupil of the great Von Seeckt, he had come out to this country six years ago as a member of a German military mission invited to make a survey of the army and recommendations for its reorganization. When the rest of the mission returned to Germany, in 1927, Schmidt stayed on—first as inspector-general of the new army he had done so much to create, then as commander-in-chief. He had learned to speak excellent Spanish and, two years after his arrival, he had formally changed his citizenship. He liked to speak of himself as a soldier of fortune; there was nothing German about him now, so he said, but his training, his precision and his erect posture. What these protestations were worth only Schmidt himself knew. But, beyond dispute, he was an able and thorough officer, and he had built the ragged army of his adopted country into a surprisingly effective fighting force.

The picture hadn't come quite clear yet. The rumor I was pursuing had Johann Schmidt in it, certainly, but how much more I did not know. Restless in the compartment I had all to myself, I got up and went out into the corridor. The train was jerking around the first, sharp curves of the foothills, and I braced myself. Then, a little farther down the dimly lighted corridor, I saw Isabella Olivar.

"What have you heard?" she asked me at once. "You are going to Rio Oro? But why? Is there news from up that way?"



"El monte!" I heard them cry, in every accent known to terror. They brushed the patrols aside and ran . . .

"Only what everyone was repeating in Puerto Grande this morning. Why are you going up there?"

"Diego is with his regiment. They left yesterday, on very short notice. I couldn't bear sitting at home alone, doing nothing. There is to be a field-hospital at Rio Oro, and I got permission to go as a nurse."

"But—is it a war?"

"War has not been declared. If it had been, we might know better what we have to fear. Diego had heard of fighting along the border. He supposed that was why his regiment—"

"But it's preposterous!" I interrupted. "The border in those parts has never been established exactly. And why should it be? There's nothing there but mountains and jungle, of no use to either country."

The girl shrugged. "It is good enough to fight over, one supposes! My father foretold fighting when the appropriations for the army were first increased, when General Schmidt was named commander-in-chief. My father said it was not a game to be played by one side only, that our neighbors could not view it with complacency."

"Nothing has been said about a dispute over the border. If there has been fighting, it is the result of panic or exasperation, something quite local in origin you may be sure. To send a whole regiment—"

"Diego's regiment was only one. There are many."

I considered this. If it were true, someone was deliberately making an issue out of what had started as a very minor irritation. But why?

Did Johann Schmidt consider actual combat an indispensable part of an army's training? Did he want to test the soundness of his work in the only laboratory he recognized? And did he want to make sure of getting the country thoroughly committed before he asked the statesmen for a formal declaration of war? Was that why the fighting was still only a matter of rumors?

As yet, I could only guess at the answers to these questions.

A naked bulb hanging from the roof of the corridor where we were standing cast a sharp light on Isabella Olivar's right cheek, but her eyes and all but the corner of her mouth were in shadow. She didn't look at me or at the dark square of the window or at anything in particular. She leaned against the creaking partition and stared straight before her at something no one else could see. She and Diego had been married for less than two years. When you undertake to write the story of a war, I think it is only honest to mention the faces of girls like Isabella Olivar. They have as good a right to be included as Johann Schmidt.

I WENT back to my compartment and managed to sleep through the last two hours of darkness. When I awoke dawn had come, and I got breakfast for Isabella Olivar and myself from the vendors at a wayside station. I do not think the girl had slept at all; her eyes were enormous with weariness and fear. When we reached Rio Oro, at ten in the morning, I took her to the field-hospital. Then I set out to find quarters for myself, and to find General Schmidt.

I found Schmidt first. To my surprise, he seemed glad to see me. I had known Schmidt a long time, but we were never on easy terms. I had found him cold, reserved, a little suspicious, extremely hard to talk to. Excitement might account for the change in him now. He got up and shook hands with me with a cordiality that left me blinking. One result, and he may have intended it, was that it was he who conducted the conversation, while I listened.

"You may write what you please," he told me. "I ask only that you hand in your reports to my adjutant. They will be put on the wires as soon as the time is opportune. I am sure you understand why they must be delayed a day or two. Have you any questions?"

"What started all this?"

He shrugged. "I am only a soldier. I have nothing to do with the way wars start; my job is to try to stop them!"

"It is a war, then?"

"Not yet. There have been skirmishes." He pushed a map toward me, across the table. "I will tell them to give you a copy of this. Here is the river, Rio Oro, where it comes out of the hills, roughly, the boundary between the two countries. We fight on our own soil, by our own choice. You observe that the enemy can claim to have advanced. But behind him, two miles back of the lines, he has the river. In case of a major defeat, you see what would happen. He is piled up against the river, with only two bridges."

"What about this mountain?"

"Absolutely impassable! I am talking of Central American troops; with a regiment of Bavarians— But with the men we have, it cannot be turned; it is safe to forget all about it. My right, and the enemy's left, are covered. The mountain is a sort of bastion ending that spur of the chain. A volcano, by the way, if that matters. Sometimes it scatters a few ashes and causes small earthquakes."

Volcanoes were an old story, in that part of the world. I got up. "Thank you," I said. "Have I your permission to visit the lines?"

"If you will come here and ask for a guide."

He shook hands with me again as I was leaving. He seemed in a very good humor.

There was no hurry about the first of my dispatches. It could not be sent until Schmidt

saw fit, and anyway, there were still too many things I did not understand, too many things at which I had to guess. General Schmidt had established his headquarters in a stone house on the square. When I came out, I stood for a long time and merely stared.

I knew those back-country villages, where life went slowly, as if dwarfed by the overshadowing hills and daunted by the enveloping jungle. But Rio Oro was transformed into an armed camp! An artillery-park occupied the square. There was hurry and confusion and much exasperated shouting, as there is when you put between five and ten thousand men with their equipment in a village intended for a few hundred. Frightened Indians and peons from the hills stood gaping all about. They had to jump back to let a field-battery go by, at the trot.

In the vague distance, other guns were firing, precise and unhurried. Nearer at hand, the field-hospital was eloquent of what Schmidt had called skirmishes; it must must have been crowded already with casualties. A dull moaning came to me where I was standing, and sometimes a man cried out in shrill agony. Sounds like that are another thing you should mention when you set out to write about a war.

I sat for a long time over lunch and a bottle of local wine as light and clean and dry as the air in the hills. The wine did nothing to lighten the depression that had descended upon me in Puerto Grande. The truth behind that rumor that had brought me up here was even uglier than I had feared, and most sinister of all was the elation of General Johann Schmidt. This was war, and with even less to justify it than most wars. This was the face of Isabella Olivar in the train and the noises from the hospital, and if those things made Schmidt and his kind happy—

I looked up, startled. Gray flakes of ash were settling on the table, very fine to the touch, very slow in falling. Of course, the volcano! But I had no present interest in volcanoes.

THE delicate fall of ashes continued all afternoon, while I made a trip up to the lines. It was a strange war, with the positions lost in the careless welter of the jungle. Artillery kept up a perfunctory fire, and Schmidt's guns had evidently established their superiority. Here and there I could see the gash a shell had torn in the undergrowth, where the universal green was streaked with the white of splintered wood. A smell of burning hung in the air, and my nostrils stung. The firing hadn't been that heavy, had it? But then I saw that it must be from the ashes, from the volcano.

Diego Olivar commanded a squad in a sort of outpost thrust forward from the main line. I got a great welcome. "Isabella came up? But how like her! It's splendid; I can see her every four days, when we are relieved!"

"Any messages?"

"Tell Isabella— But she knows, without being told again. Tell her I am well, that's all. Perhaps there will be an attack tomorrow, and then there will be more to tell!"

Diego Olivar was keen, excited and impatient, and in that he was typical of his countrymen. Visibly, Diego thought of himself as hurling back the invader from his native soil. It was precisely this theatrical flair that endeared these people to me. They did nothing by halves, mixed none of their emotions with self-consciousness or skepticism. It was odd, in a way, to see the cold snouts of two heavy machine guns poking up from the rim of Diego's outpost. No generous emotion to them!

I went back to the town. At the hospital, they told me Señora Olivar was too busy to see me, so I scribbled a note to give her her young husband's message.

The quarters I had found had a narrow balcony overlooking the square. In the evening I took a chair out, to sit in the gathering darkness there. No use trying to sleep, with the guns pounding away in the distance and the square below choked with men, munitions and supplies. I thought something must be in the wind for tomorrow. The reserves were marching off to positions of support, and the ground seemed to shake as they passed. Once I heard a little crash from the room behind me, and went to investigate. A framed picture, a religious print, had fallen from its place. The tramp of men marching was hardly enough to do that, but then I remembered that it must be an earthquake—that volcano Schmidt had mentioned. When I went out on the balcony again, I could still distinguish the bulk and silence of the mountain, hung above all the bustle and confusion of the square. Yes, the mountain's doing. Now that I thought of it, ashes were still falling—rather more heavily, it seemed to me. But no one paid any attention.

It was after midnight when I lay down, without undressing, and fell asleep. Before dawn a furious, rolling cannonade awakened me, certainly the prelude to an attack. When I looked out, the square was deserted. Even so early, the air was oppressive, always with that smell of burning in it. Downstairs, the woman of the house gave me coffee. I walked across the quiet square to Schmidt's headquarters.

The general had gone forward to watch the attack, an orderly told me. It was for dawn; by now it must have been launched. If all went well, the army of the enemy would be annihilated!

One of Johann Schmidt's staff announced this very result, and jubilantly. He flung the reins of his horse to the orderly. "I am to send word to Puerto Grande that the operation is a complete success! We took them by surprise,

and both bridges were destroyed by the preliminary bombardment. The enemy were thrown back in hopeless confusion upon the river. Only a fraction of their forces reached the other bank. It's estimated that at least three regiments were swept away, drowned, in attempting to cross. Almost as many fell in the fighting. It is a rout!"

"The advance is halted at the river?"

"For the time, yes."

"Losses on this side?"

"Heavy," the officer admitted. "Our troops were carried away with enthusiasm when they saw the enemy in full retreat. We have lost perhaps two thousand in killed and wounded."

Within an hour the wounded began coming down, in ambulances, on country carts and hobbling and crawling horribly as the tide swelled. Schmidt came back, less complacent than his staff-officer. He dropped into a chair, and lit a long cigar.

"Everything's done," he said heavily. "But damn an army of patriots! All I taught them, forgotten! They had to be heroes!" He nodded toward the growing throng outside the hospital. "There they are, some of those heroes!"

"It's appalling! The suffering, the sheer agony of it!"

Schmidt only shrugged at that. He had ripped open the collar of his tunic. "I'm half-choked, and this cigar tastes of sulphur. I tell you, my calculations were right! I know my business, if these fools don't. If they hadn't let themselves be carried away, we could have cut our losses in two, and the advance could have proceeded at once." He stood up, kicking the chair out of his way. "Patriots!"

The advance was delayed, and there would be no more news until it could be resumed. I started back to my own quarters. Then I changed my mind, and turned in the direction of the hospital. Talking to Schmidt, I hadn't noticed it, or had laid it to nothing more than heat and excitement, but outside, walking across the square, my head swam and my breath came in gasps. I forced myself to walk slowly. I wanted to see Isabella Olivar; there might be something I could do for her. Or for Diego. It was possible that Diego— But I would not think of that until I had to.

Because I walked slowly, I was in the middle of the square when the earthquake struck. I knew better than to seek shelter. It began with a jangle of bells from the little church, and that told me that the violent trembling of the ground was not from any sudden dizziness of my own. The belfry swayed visibly, and a heavy stone crashed to the square below. It fell amid universal silence that broke a moment later into all the noises of panic and terror. The sky darkened slowly, and the fall of ashes increased until I could stare through it unblinded at the morning sun. I made out that, in the distance, all the guns had ceased firing. Indeed, in the face of this, artillery would have been merely impertinent.

Whole rows of the flimsy houses about the square lay in ruins, but the hospital still stood. I resumed my walk toward it, simply to reassert my individual will. The ground was solid once more, but I caught myself stepping carefully, as if fearful of disturbing its seeming response. A deep distrust possessed me. I had never been through a harder shock, and while the memory of it stayed thus vivid, I ignored the fall of ashes. One thing at a time!

In the hospital a distracted orderly, trying to light a lamp, told me where to find Isabella. "In the room there at the end, the only one without a number."

I knocked, and she opened the door. "Diego is here," she said.

"What happened?"

"His right leg. A bullet splintered the bone. They operated this morning. He is under morphia."

"Are you all right? Is there anything you need?"

"Nothing. He has to be quiet. Is there a storm coming? It's very dark, isn't it?"

"Yes, a storm." I was not going to tell her the truth. "Look, I'll come back in an hour or two. If Diego regains consciousness, tell him the attack was a complete success."

"A complete success," she repeated. I was sure the words meant nothing to her.

Outside, it was darker than ever, and flares were burning in front of the principal buildings. In spite of all the coming and going, the square was quiet; the deepening carpet of ashes muffled all sound, and wheels and hooves and feet moved noiselessly. In the middle of the square, a mule stood on its fore-legs and kicked madly. Free from its harness, it fled, and no one tried to stop it. It vanished into the darkness, but I thought I should never forget its eyes, starting in terror. The muscles of its flanks stood out like cords.

A patrol stopped me before I reached my own quarters, and I had to show my papers. General Schmidt's orders, said the sergeant in charge. There had been a little panic among the reserves, and even some shooting. A company had broken ranks. The sergeant advised me to stay indoors.

A DOZEN times that day I put my watch to my ear, sure that it must have stopped. The darkness and the falling ashes persisted. At two o'clock, while I ate a lunch without any taste, the second earthquake occurred—no harder than the former one, but minutes longer. Visible from the town, a dull glow gathered above the crater of the mountain. It wavered like a bale-fire, red and angry. I wondered how it would look from the positions up along

the river, in the very shadow of the mountain.

Then, toward three o'clock, though it seemed flatly incredible, I heard faint rifle-fire. Had the fighting begun again? Had the enemy nerved himself to attack, hoping to find panic at work for an ally? I leaned from my balcony as the scattered firing came quickly nearer. I could see only a little way, and the other side of the square was dim and uncertain. But it was beginning to get somewhat lighter, I thought; the fall of ashes was lessening. All at once, the fighting swept into view, almost at my feet. I sat staring, open-mouthed.

It was like no fighting I had ever seen before. The patrols ran forward, halted, faced about and fired. Here and there a man fell. But the patrols were powerless before the oncoming, panic-stricken mass—not an army, but a crowd in flight. Most of the men had thrown their rifles aside; rifles were useless. The word that beat on my ears was of no human enemy. *"El monte!"* I heard them cry, in every accent known to terror. "The mountain! The mountain!" They brushed the patrols aside and ran, just as that mule had run.

There was nothing to fear from them, unless you stood in their way. Except loosely, you couldn't call it mutiny or desertion. It was a sight that might scarcely be seen again on earth until the terrors foretold for earth's last days. It is the image that comes to my mind now when I hear the phrase, "an act of God."

The story was unique, and I had to find out all I could about it. By eight o'clock the last of the fleeing men were gone, streaming down toward the lower hills and safety. Night came as a deepening of the day's long darkness. The fire over the mountain glowed a little more brightly as I rode up with Schmidt to lines still held by a skeleton force of officers and a handful of men. The German had an iron self-command I was forced to admire.

A hard-bitten captain of regulars had held part of his command together. "By shooting the first man to drop his rifle! General, I have lived to see an army fly from a foe in flight! It was like a madness! They broke and fled just as our own men did, shrieking, 'The mountain! The mountain!'"

"Yes, the mountain!" Schmidt turned to stare up at it, with its plume of fire. It was hard to believe that he was laughing, but suddenly he went off into gales of outraged, half-hysterical laughter, there with the ashes flecking his uniform with stealthy scraps of gray. "The mountain!" he said, and choked. "Well, cats do not fight on a hot stove! Captain, you may withdraw your men to the village."

All the way back to Rio Oro, I watched his shoulders shaking with harsh mirth. At the village, I commandeered a horse and cart. The cart, piled with mattresses and pillows, was for Diego Olivar and Isabella, and I led the horse the long way to the new railhead. Plodding along in the darkness, I was thinking of the dispatch I should send.

The big news about this war was that it was never declared, it never really got started, it wasn't a war at all! What others might think of that I did not know, but to me it seemed an event of tremendous importance, a sort of emendation, an alternative reading to what might have been only another weary chapter of the history of our time.

Those lights ahead, I supposed, must be at the present railhead. Isabella called to me that Diego had not once wakened from the merciful drug. She said his head felt cooler, too.

THE ANCIENT ALLAN

By H. Rider Haggard

Unarmed, alone, they dared to open a strange door into Yesterday, to keep a strange tryst with destiny in the days when ancient Egypt was young!

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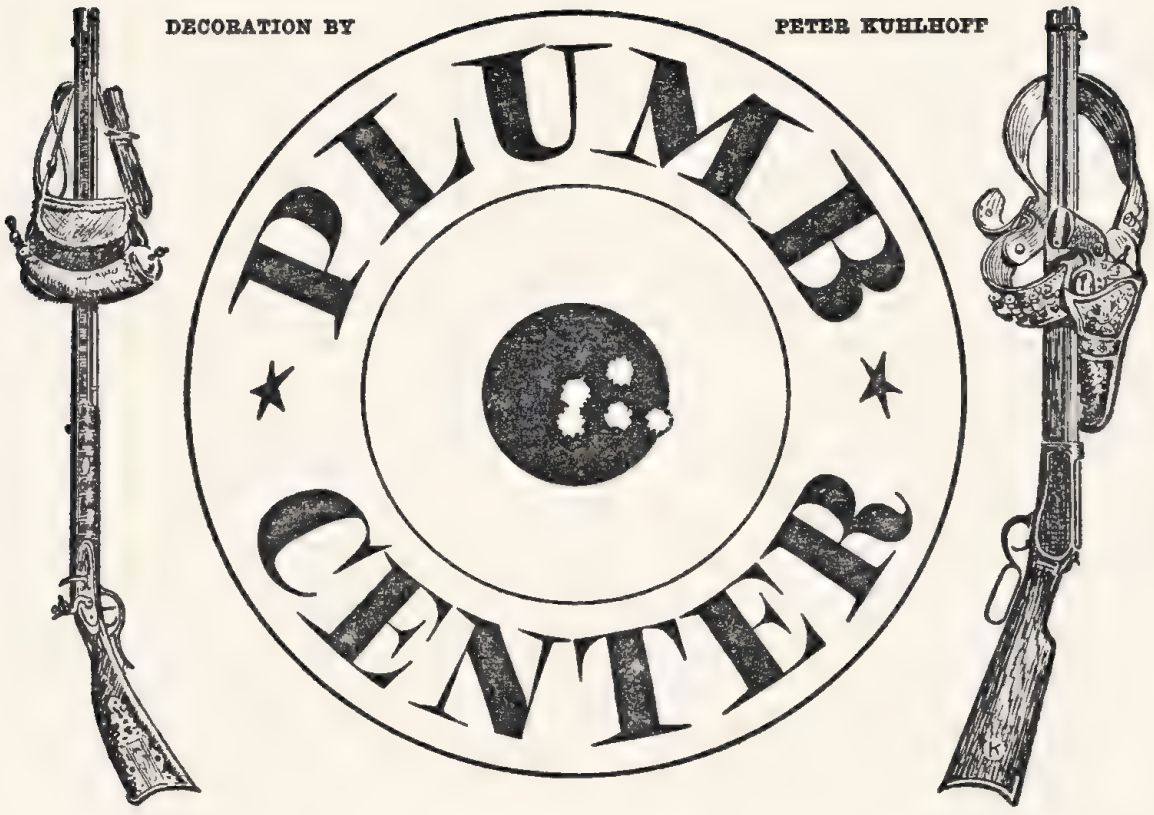


By E. E. HALLERAN

SINCE the days of Morgan's Riflemen, marksmanship has been a peculiarly American tradition. European ideas of platoon musketry became obsolete when Colonel Morgan's squirrel hunters demoralized the grenadiers at Saratoga, American marksmanship forcing an adjustment in the whole business of military tactics. It took the conservative military experts forty years to see the point, but when Andy Jackson's backwoodsmen repeated the lesson at New Orleans even the generals were convinced.

By that time pride in marksmanship had become a typical American quality. Americans could shoot—and were proud of the fact. Some of that pride remains with us today, even among those of us who must take our shooting vicariously. Men who have never fired a gun get a kick out of a Sergeant York, not so much because of his impressive bag of prisoners but because a neat bit of shooting made the job possible. We thrill to bull's-eyes, broken clay pigeons and neatly killed game, even if we personally cannot hit the side of a barn from the interior.

It is this second-hand pride in marksmanship which seems to be responsible for the way we have distorted the whole tradition. We have forgotten the Morgans, the Jacksons and the Yorks, and have identified marksmanship with the gunmen of the Great Plains. Due to the fiction and movie influence, names like Buffalo Bill Cody, Wild Bill Hickok, Bat Masterson, Wyatt Earp and Billy the Kid become synonymous with gun wizardry. Every gun-totin' cowhand is a sharpshooter and the whole cattle country is a vast arena where gun miracles are performed by everyone.

All of which is clearly absurd. In spite of manufactured or exaggerated stories, there is a clear body of evidence to prove that the average Westerner was no great marksman. The cowboy's six-gun was no marvel of hair-line accuracy, nor did he shoot it with any de-

A FACT STORY

gree of skill. Not even the notorious killers of the period depended upon accuracy for their deadliness.

There were some really fine shots on the prairie frontier, both in the ranks of the fighting marshals and among the outlaws, but the standard of skill does not seem high for a land where every man carried a gun and was accustomed to use it. The noted gun slicks were, for the most part, nervy fighters who used their Colts as they might have used brass knuckles. Their pet range was arm's length and their skill consisted largely in the ability to get their gun muzzles against the enemy's abdomen before the enemy could achieve that praiseworthy purpose. The maximum range was usually the width of a bar room. Put the gun hawk out in the open and he could waste his lead with the worst of us.

A case in point is the famous Lincoln County War of New Mexico. A property wrangle between two ambitious gentlemen named Murphy and McSween developed into a real war—several months of skirmishing culminating in a full scale, three-day battle. During the skirmishing period both sides imported gunmen from all parts of the southwest and the showdown fight pitted sixty Murphy men against a slightly smaller number of McSween adherents, led by Billy the Kid. Nearly every man in the fight was a known killer and had been hired for that very reason. Almost everyone was armed with both a rifle and a six-shooter. They fought for three days, firing thousands of rounds of ammunition—with a death toll of one! A quarter of a ton of lead expended to achieve one death!

As a climax to this profligate waste of powder there was a somewhat more deadly but equally shocking episode. On the last night of the battle, the McSween home was fired, forcing eleven defenders to come out into the firelight. The house was surrounded, most of the besiegers in position behind a wall only thirty feet from the one possible exit. When the last wall was about to crash, the trapped men made their break, dashing out into a yard lighted by the flames and covered by the guns of some twenty noted gunmen.

It would have been something of a marvel for any one of them to have come through alive. Actually six lived to tell the tale, four of them completely unhurt! One of these fortunate ones was Billy the Kid. He came out last, to become the target of every gun. Fifty bullets were aimed at his heart by men who desired his death more than anything else in the world, by men who handled guns as a business and who had every advantage in the fight. Not a slug even nicked him.

Earlier in the feud there had been two similar examples of amazingly poor shooting. Buckshot Billy Roberts was attacked by thirteen McSween men at conversation range, the attackers including Billy the Kid, Charlie Bowdre, Hendry Brown, Tom O'Folliard and others whose lethal records were but slightly less spectacular. Roberts was mortally wounded at the first volley but found cover and fought off his enemies until they wearied and drew off. Out of all the storm of lead which raged across a few yards of open ground just three bullets drew blood!

A few days later, The Kid and four companions ambushed Sheriff Brady and three men. Firing without warning from a distance of less than thirty feet—with rifles—these trigger experts killed just one man of the four.

WYOMING'S Johnson County War was almost as astonishing in its wasteful shooting. Twenty-five imported gunmen teamed up with an equal number of local sharps to attack two "rustlers." One of the victims was killed at the first fire when he emerged from his cabin at dawn. The other man dragged his dying companion to cover and put up an all-day fight against the fifty attackers. In the evening he was finally driven out by fire, as had happened to the McSween men. In the course of a full day of firing he had wounded two men, the hundreds of bullets fired by the attackers having done no damage at all.

In the ranks of the noted killers not more than three or four seem to have been exceptions to the general rule that speed was everything and accuracy nothing. Billy the Kid has a reputation as a marksman in spite of his poor exhibition in the affairs of Roberts and Brady. He was reputed to be able to throw a hat in the air and put six shots into it before it fell. He would gallop his horse along a fence line, taking pot shots at the snowbirds on the posts. He could average two out of the six shots and was sometimes reported to hit six in a row. At least that is the story. He was scarcely up to that standard in Lincoln County and he did not seem to be too confident about his own prowess with the six-gun. Certainly he had the pick of the armory when he broke out of the Lincoln County jail—and he chose a shotgun as his getaway weapon!

There is no reliable evidence to show that Bat Masterson, Billy Tighlman, Doc Holliday and their fellows were superior marksmen. They relied on nerve and speed, the close range of most of their fights making accuracy a minor matter. Bat Masterson, who ruled Dodge so long that he met most of his fellow tradesmen, claimed that Ben Thompson was the most dangerous gunman of them all—and Ben never made any pretense of being a sharpshooter. He simply excelled on nerve and willingness to slug it out with six-guns at arm's length.

It is generally conceded that Wild Bill Hickok was the real sharpshooter of the period. Despite the contradictory yarns which shroud his true character, there is ample indication that he could shoot with amazing accuracy. His ability with a rifle made him a Union sniper of some fame in the Civil War and his six-gun stunts are accepted as fact even by hostile biographers.

He could put six quick shots into a three-inch circle at fifty yards. He could kill a flying crow with a rifle. He could shoot accurately with two guns at the same time—in two different directions. Most remarkable, he could perform capably while in the saddle of a running horse. On one occasion he agreed to fight a duel with four belligerent cowboys. The five antagonists drew their guns at the signal of a referee, Hickok's right arm being crippled at the first fire. He changed his gun to the left hand and continued the fight, hitting all four opponents in the head and suffering no other injury to himself.

It seems to point the moral. Hickok could shoot; his opponents were just average gunmen—and they missed!

Buffalo Bill Cody said that Hickok was the best shot on the plains, being even better than the famous trick-shot artist, Doc Carver. Cody was no slouch himself and he had toured with Carver long enough to know the showman's ability. It seems to bear out the claim that Hickok was the only gun fighter of the era who *never* missed his man in any of his fights.

Still it was Wild Bill who, preparing for trouble after his shooting of Coe, patroled the streets of Abilene with a shotgun.

Cody himself was never a gunfighter but he was certainly one of the better performers with both rifle and six-shooter. He was uncanny with a pistol at thrown targets, even before his show days when he used fine shot instead of bullets. Like Hickok, he could use two guns at the same time, a rare ability—movie evidence to the contrary notwithstanding.

Yet Cody made his buffalo-hunting record under circumstances where accuracy played a minor part. He himself credits his success to the training of his horse, allowing him to ride so close to the animals that a miss was well nigh impossible.

ONE of our foremost western "authorities" makes the statement that the bulk of cowboys could "pour" six-shots into a two-inch circle at a hundred feet and that most cowboys would not "under any circumstances miss with any shot a target as large as a standing man at that distance."

Of such exaggeration are the legends made. Hickok is recognized as tops but he scarcely matches the former claim. The record itself explodes the latter one. The legend maker won't let his average cowhand miss a man at a hundred feet, but twenty professional gunmen missed several men at less than thirty feet in Lincoln County—and missed them with several shots!

Undoubtedly there were other experts in western annals but their exploits were in no sense typical of the cowboy. Lieutenant Harry Wheeler of the Arizona Rangers could throw five empty cartridge cases into the air and hit each with a bullet before they struck the ground. In real life it made him a rifleman in a class by himself; in fiction he has become just another commonplace shot.

A Wyoming rustler, trapped in a cabin by a posse, staged a one-man sortie, firing his rifle as he ran. He crossed the weapon from one shoulder to the other after each shot so as to keep firing without destroying the rhythm of his running, killing five men before he went down. It's a gun story worthy of attention but cannot be accepted as the performance of the ordinary range rider. Not one man in a thousand could have perfomed the acrobatics necessary for such a feat, not to mention the shooting.

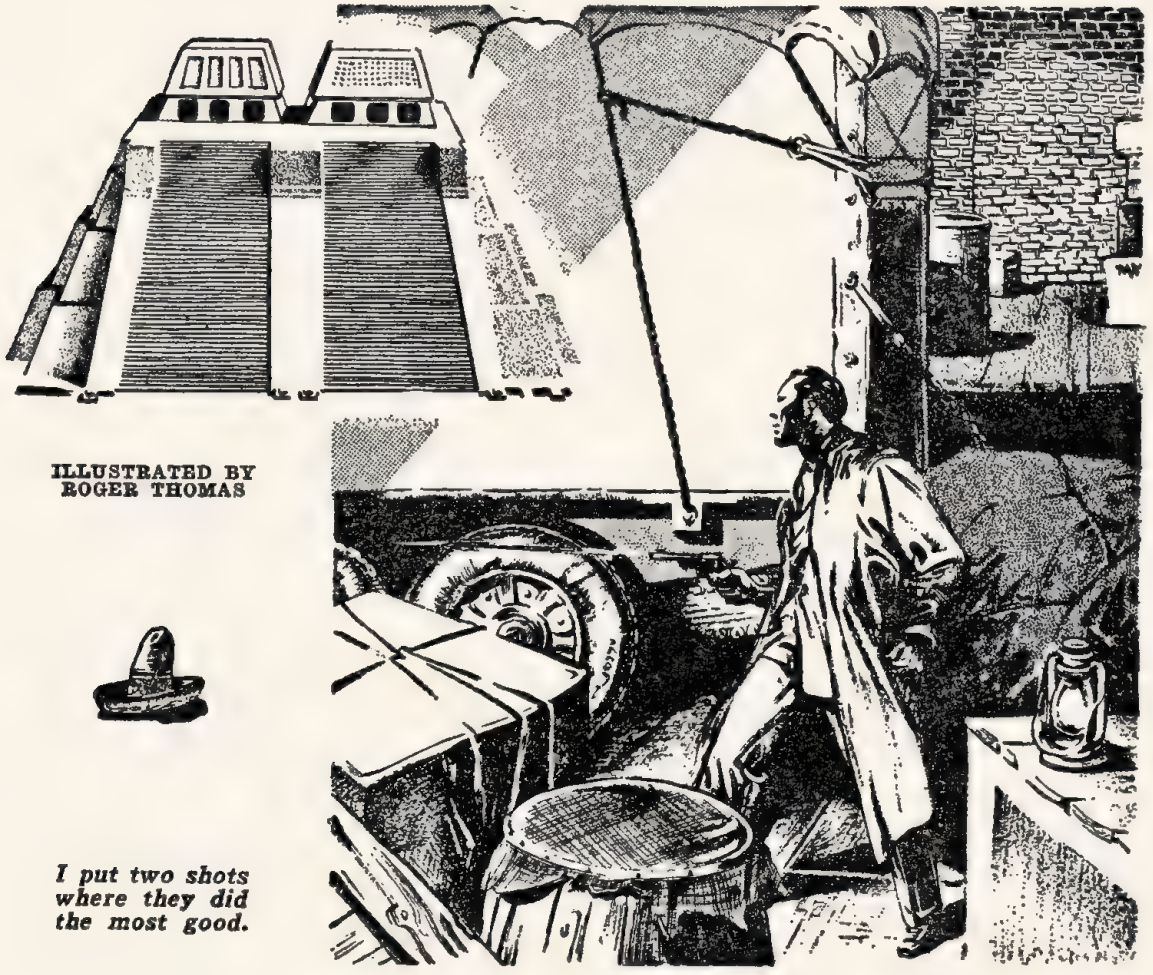
Nor does any of this detract from the westerner's real claim to fame. He had to be fast, alert and courageous. These were his stock in trade—not marksmanship. Once in a while a man appeared who was both gunfighter and marksman.

Wild Bill Hickok was one. Another less famous one was a certain Louisiana Kid who entertained the Creede, Colorado miners by shooting the trigger finger from the hand of the marshal who came to arrest him. The marshal took his gun in his left hand—and the Kid promptly shot the trigger finger from that hand also. It happened once in history but it has appeared many times in fiction.

Other gunmen had neither skill, courage nor accuracy, only the wild desire to achieve fame. It is significant that fame came to the killer rather than the marksman. Hence the deaths of so many noted gunmen at the hands of arrant cowards. Hickok, Hardin and Tom Smith were killed from behind. Mannen Clements was shot while he was peering at the ceiling through the bottom of a whiskey glass. Billy the Kid died when he walked into a dark room where Pat Garret waited in ambush. John Selman was shot while he was unarmed.

Add it all up and it seems clear that we are deluding ourselves when we center our straight-shooting traditions in the cow country. Give the Appalachian hill-billies their due; they were the people who made marksmanship a continuing thrill to the average American. Our western heroes have enough in their undoubted courage; there is no need for them to steal the glory of the Morgans, the Jacksons and the Yorks.

FROM THE HALLS OF MONTEZUMA



ILLUSTRATED BY ROGER THOMAS

I put two shots where they did the most good.

By DAY KEENE

NOW understand, I'm not swearing this is so. You can believe it or not—that's up to you. All I actually *know* of the affair is the phone call, what we saw in the Bader & Helm Warehouse, and what Blackie Harris told us in the prison ward at County before he died. That much I have in my notebook, sworn to and witnessed by the nurse and the young interne who fed Blackie enough narcotic backbone to clear up the record before he died.

The hell of it was, Blackie didn't do much clearing up—mostly confused things even more than they had been. But while there is still a murder warrant in the files naming Xaver Galdos, no one on the Force would be fool enough to try to serve it. Even Mike admits that lemon-colored Indian is one tough little lad. What is more, the only thing yellow about him is his skin. He always had plenty of moxie. Even his worst enemies admitted that.

Maybe you remember him, maybe not. He

was the leading bantamweight contender for a time. That was before the three B's got him—blondes, bright lights and Blackie. They washed him up in a hurry. The blondes took what money he'd saved, he lost his fights in the night clubs, and it wasn't long before Blackie was tipping him off on how a smart lad could pick up some easy money.

Not that we could ever catch him, or Blackie either for that matter. But we knew. And when Xaver took a powder three years ago we had enough raps against him, if we could have proved them, to send up both him and Blackie for one hundred and ninety-nine years. And there was nothing petty about them. They ranged from narcotics and single mayhem to bank robbery and murder.

Both he and Blackie disappeared about the same time. Rumor had it that Blackie had gone to Wisconsin and become a gentleman farmer on his loot and that Xaver had slipped south of the border. I, for one, hoped he'd stay there. He didn't rate on the same charge sheet with Blackie. Despite the fact that he had turned thief and killer, you couldn't help but like the guy. And if it hadn't been for Blackie egging the blondes on and stepping up the voltage of the bright lights, Xaver would have stayed the same simple grinning kid he had been when he first hit town.

In those days everyone had liked him. His only claim to fame had been his fists and some guy named Montezuma, who it seemed had been a big shot in Mexico at one time and was a distant relation of his. There had also been a girl, some said his wife, a black-haired slim little thing with a pretty face, mostly eyes.

She was still in town, cashiering in a Loop restaurant. But if she knew where Xaver had holed up, she wasn't putting out a thing. I asked her myself a dozen times.

It was a cold day in November, a few days before Thanksgiving, when Xaver came back to town. A wet raw wind was blowing off the Lake. A two-inch fall of snow had thawed to slush, then frozen. The heat in the squad room felt good when I showed up for my tour of duty.

Outside of the cold, there was nothing to distinguish it from any other night. A hophead that the day-shift had booked on suspicion of murder was screaming his head off in the detention cell. Petey and Max were playing pinochle for a tenth-of-a-cent a point. Mike had his feet propped up on his desk and was reading the *Record Handicapper*, trying to find a sleeper in the long shots.

He looked up long enough to grunt that I was five minutes late. I told him my car had frozen up and I had been forced to ride down to the Loop on the El.

"He just got here himself," Petey told me.

Mike gave him a dirty look but didn't say anything. We four have worked together for years. Mike is our lieutenant. That means that he gets more money—and the blame when things go wrong.

I took off my coat and hung it in my locker. When I came back Max wanted to know if he should deal three hands. I said he should, then looked at Mike. His phone had rung about three times, but he still had his nose in his racing form.

"If you don't mind a suggestion, Lieutenant," I told him, "it might be well to lay off the hay burners long enough to answer your phone. Who knows? Someone could be dead!"

He looked over his racing form and said, sarcastically, "Now, Charlie. Don't tell me it's so cold outside that one of yesterday's phone calls has just thawed out in those wing-flaps you call ears."

I shrugged. "O.K. Don't answer it."

He said, "You mean to tell me you hear my phone ringing?"

I said I did and appealed to the other boys. "You're hearing things," Max told me.

Petey looked at the phone, then at me. "Either that or you have better ears than I have."

I picked up the phone on Mike's desk and said, "Hello?"

The voice sounded thin and far away, as if its owner were talking through a wine glass. But it was familiar. "This is Xaver Galdos, Charlie," Xaver informed me pleasantly. "Remember me?"

I said I did.

He chuckled. "Why don't you boys drop over and see Juanita. I believe she has something to tell you."

I cupped my palm over the mouthpiece, jeering, "Now who's crazy! It's Xaver Galdos calling. One of you get on another phone and have the operator trace this." Petey made a dash for the front office. I took my palm off the mouthpiece, but before I had said two words I knew the line was dead.

I hung up and looked at Mike. His face was red with anger. "What the hell are you trying to pull, Charlie?" he demanded. "There was no one on that phone."

I told him that, lieutenant or not, he couldn't call me a liar. Max stepped in between us. "Now wait a minute, boys," he insisted. "There's something screwy here."

Petey reappeared in the doorway. He was squinting the way he does when something puzzles him. "You weren't horsing, Charlie?" he asked. *"You were talking to someone?"*

I said, hotly, that I had been talking to Xaver Galdos, that I had recognized his voice distinctly, that he had called me Charlie and asked why we didn't drop over to see Juanita, as she had something to tell us.

Petey tried to light his cigarette but his hand was shaking so badly that he couldn't make

contact with the flame. "That's funny, damn funny," he informed us. "The dame down on the switchboard says that she hasn't plugged in this extension for an hour."

THE building was old and the hallway poorly lighted. Someone was frying frijoles. On one of the upper floors we could hear the eternal *pat-pat-pat* of flesh on dough as some American-Mexican housewife beat out a mess of the tortillas that they insist on using in place of bread.

We had gotten the address from the owner of the restaurant in which Juanita worked.

Mike Flavern was still sore. As we walked up the stairs, he rubbed the frost from his ears and made audible comments about the mental standing of detectives who heard voices.

I stopped him. "You thought enough of the hunch, or mental telepathy, or whatever it was, to bring along those warrants that we're holding against Xaver, didn't you?"

He admitted that he had. "But it wasn't a hunch," he insisted. "And it wasn't telepathy. If you heard a voice, Xaver managed somehow to cut in on our wire." The thought seemed to cheer him. "Sure. Of course. That's what it was. That's why the call didn't come through the board. That's why the bell was so faint that the rest of us couldn't hear it."

Max said that could be. Petey didn't say anything. I rapped on the door of 210. Juanita opened it herself. The only familiar thing about her was her eyes. She was wearing a simple cotton dress that clung to the curves of her figure. The elaborate hair-do that she usually wore was gone. Her hair hung down to her waist in two long thick black braids. She wasn't wearing any make-up and she looked more Indian than Mex.

"*Si?*" she asked pleasantly.

I looked at Mike. He grinned. "Go ahead. This is your party."

I felt like a fool. "We're from Detective Headquarters, Juanita," I began, "and—"

"But yes. Of course," she said, smiling. "Xaver said that you would call." She opened the door wider. "Come in, please."

There was a battered suitcase on the bed and several piles of neatly folded clothing beside it. It was obvious she was packing.

"You have seen Xaver, then?" Mike asked.

She smiled, "But of course. He spent the day with me." She indicated the suitcase. "And as you can see, *señor*, I am packing now to join him when he is finished with his business."

Mike fingered the warrants in his pocket. "And just where are you going to join him, Juanita?"

I expected her to stall. She didn't. "In Tenochtitlan," she said promptly. Her eyes shone. "Because of the bad things that he did, because of the men whom he killed for gain, there was some doubt at first that he would be allowed to go." She smiled. "But now Mexitli has said that he could come, and all is well again."

Neither name meant a thing to me, but I felt sorry for the girl. Mike Flavern, not this lad Mexitli, was running the Homicide Squad. And once we got our hands on him, the only place that Xaver was going was to the electric chair. I said, "Of course it's none of my business, Juanita, but after the way he treated you, after all the other women that he chased around with, I shouldn't think you'd be willing to go anywhere with him."

She looked at me dully, not understanding. "But I am his wife, *señor*."

Petey asked, "Did he tell you where he's been holed up these past three years, Juanita?"

"I did not ask him," she said. "It was enough that he returned to me."

There was something screwy somewhere but I couldn't put my finger on it. I waited for one of the other boys to ask a question. Mike cleared his throat but didn't speak. For a moment the only sound was the *pat-pat-pat* of the hands of the woman upstairs as she fashioned a tortilla. I broke the silence by saying, "When Xaver called us a few minutes ago, Juanita, he said you had something to tell us."

She said, "That is so, *señor*. He said for me to tell you that when we first came to *los Estados Unidos*, though he was but a simple country boy from a little known *pueblo*, everyone was kind. Good men were his friends. He was honored because of his courage and his skill. He was allowed to make much money." Her full lips tightened slightly. "He said to say that if it had not been for Señor Black Harris, who put strange drinks to his lips, taught him new delights and whispered bad things in his ears, he would still be honored and respected. For all this he is grateful."

I looked at Mike. He was creasing one of the warrants between his fingers. "And just where is Xaver now?" he asked her.

The girl shook her head. "That I do not know, *señor*. But he also told me to tell you that he will be at the Bader and Helm Warehouse at two o'clock this morning."

Max shook his head as if to clear it. "Look. What kind of a run-around is this? Are you trying to kid us?"

She said she was not.

Mike said, "Xaver told you to tell us that he will be at the Bader and Helm Warehouse at two o'clock this morning?"

She said that was correct, then, as if she had lost all further interest in the subject, began to pile the things on the bed in the suitcase.

Mike inclined his head toward the door. We joined him in the hall. "So?" he demanded.

"It's way over my head," Petey said. "Xaver's

a crook but he isn't dumb. He can't help but know he's wanted for murder."

I asked, "But if he's planning on clearing out for good with Juanita, why tip us off where we can pick him up?"

Max said it smelled like a trap to him. "He's probably up to here with dodging cops and wants to get himself a few before he scrams."

Mike wanted to know what was stored in the Bader and Helm Warehouse. I said I didn't know but thought an Army supply unit had taken it over. A phone call to G2 should clear up the matter.

"We'll call from downstairs," Mike said. "And while we're at it, we'll put a stake-out on the house in case the Indian should come back here before two." He added, grimly, "He's been a black spot in the open file for three years. And I don't know any other guy I'd rather pick up, unless it would be Blackie."

I stepped back in the doorway and asked Juanita, "Xaver is going to pick you up here?"

She told me, smiling, "No, *señor*. I am to meet him in Tenochtitlan."

I doubted it very much. But I didn't tell her so.

THE G2 major was chubby, rosy-cheeked, and dubious. "But, gentlemen," he protested on the way to the warehouse, "no crook in town would dare to try to rob Uncle Sam that's simply incredible!"

Mike said we had some pretty tough crooks in town, pointing out further that if lads with larceny in their hearts could be scared off because Uncle Sam was involved there would be little need for federal pens, or for the FBI, for that matter.

Major Marks was unconvinced. "The warehouse is filled with narcotics, true, most of it in the form of morphine syrettes that were due to be shipped to the Pacific," he admitted. "But I still doubt—"

Petey broke in to say that less than six months before we had been working on the local angle of a case that had involved the theft of some ten thousand morphine syrettes that had been stolen from a Pacific Coast loading platform.

Max added, "And with dope as hard to get as it is since the war cut off the regular supply lines—well . . ." He shrugged. "The case is beginning to make sense."

"Not to me," I told him. "Why should Xaver tip us off he plans to knock over the joint?"

"It's a form of pride," Mike said dryly. "He thinks he has something clever figured out." He added sincerely, "But for my part, I wish he'd stayed holed up. That lemon-colored Indian is one tough little lad, but you can't help liking the guy."

The warehouse was south of the Loop in the middle of a block lined solidly with other warehouses and lofts. The major had phoned on ahead, and when we tooted, the steel door opened and we drove in. There were two well-armed GI's on guard. Both of them were equipped with sub-machine guns and they looked as if they knew how to use them.

The heater had made the car warm. But there was no heat in the warehouse. When I talked I could see the words come out in little white puffs of steam.

"Everything quiet so far?" I asked one of the lads.

He told me, grinning, "I only wish something would happen. You'd be surprised how long a two-hour tour can be in this icehouse."

The chubby major led the way to a stack of cases on the second floor. They weighed maybe sixty pounds each and there were a hundred of them. Their value ran up into the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

"You can see," he pointed out, "how foolish your concern is. Even if a gang of men broke in and overpowered the guards, they couldn't carry out the syrettes."

"They could with a truck," Petey told him. "Hell, that's only three short ton."

The mention of a possible truck reminded Mike to tell Max to drive the squad car farther back into the warehouse where it couldn't be seen by anyone coming in the steel door. It was fortunate that he did. The car had hardly been parked back of some crates when a horn tooted outside the door.

I looked at my watch. It was two.

Mike slipped his gun from its holster. "Tell your boys to let them in," he told the major. "Then run down the door behind them. We've been after this lad for three years—we don't want to take any chances."

The truck wasn't what I expected. Nor was the lad who got out of it, for that matter. The truck was Army and so was he. Even from where I was standing back of an engine crate, I could see the silver eagles on his shoulder. He was too tall for one thing, and weighed perhaps twice as much as the little bantamweight.

As he slipped out from in back of the wheel he saw Major Marks and walked toward him, his right hand extended. "Well, this is a pleasant surprise, Major," he said heartily. "But may I ask what you're doing here?"

The chubby major gulped, tried to release his hand, and couldn't. The tall colonel had drawn a gun and was pressing it into his throat. "One peep out of you," he informed the guards, "and I'll blow out his windpipe. On the other hand, if there's no resistance, no one will be hurt."

The GI's stood undecided. But not for long. As if on signal a half-dozen hoods piled out of the back of the truck and covered them with sawed-off shotguns. The guards, knowing that

we were there, chose the discreet part of valor and laid down their sub-machine guns.

The colonel chuckled. "That's better. I've been out of the racket so long that I don't feel comfortable when anyone's holding a gun on me."

Mike was standing beside me. He whispered, tersely, "It's Blackie. By God, it's Blackie Harris!"

"But where is Xaver?" I whispered.

He stared through the half light at the hoods. "I'll be damned if I know," he admitted.

Blackie looked at one of the GI's, then at the other, asking the same question that I'd asked. "Where's Sergeant Xaver Galdos?"

The GI spoken to shook his head. "You've got me, Colonel. Or should I say mister? I never heard the name before."

Blackie knocked him from his feet. "Don't give me that, soldier. Galdos planned this whole thing. He's the sergeant in charge of this warehouse. Now get him down here, and fast. We want to pick up those syrettes and get out."

The rosy-cheeked major was no coward. "The hell you will!" He tried to knock Blackie's gun out of his hand.

Blackie slapped him with the barrel. "Something has gone wrong," he told his boys. "They must've pulled Xaver off the warehouse detail and put on a fresh crew. But scatter out and find those cases." He described one with his hands. "They should be about so big, weigh around sixty pounds, and there're a hundred of 'em."

Mike nudged me with his elbow, then called, "Why bother looking for them, Blackie? You aren't taking them anywhere!"

Harris may have been out of the racket for three years but he hadn't lost any of his speed or shrewdness. His first slug clipped the corner of the case, less than an inch from Mike's face. "And who tipped you off, copper?"

I put a slug in his gun hand before he could fire a second time, but it failed to stop him. He scooped his gun from the concrete with his left hand and, using the hood of the truck for a shield, put four more slugs where he'd put the first one, at the same time cursing Xaver, Uncle Sam, and Mike Flavern in turn.

"You haven't a chance," Mike warned him. "And that goes for the rest of you boys. Now get them up fast or we'll blast the lot of you."

Four of the hoodlums believed him. Two of them didn't. One of them dived for a sub-machine gun that one of the GI's had put down. But the GI recovered it first. The muzzle of the gun almost touching the hoodlum's body, he literally sawed him in half. The other gangster cut loose with his shotgun and Petey put a lead wasp in his ear. The lad clapped a hand to his head and pitched face down on the concrete, dead.

"Any more customers?" Petey called.

Blackie was still cursing Xaver and blasting at Mike and myself as fast as he could thumb fresh clips in his gun. Neither of us could get a clean shot past the high metal hood of the truck.

I told Mike, "To hell with this Mexican stand-off. The first thing we know, one of us is going to get hurt. You keep him occupied a minute."

Mike bounced a clip-full off the truck while I crawled across the floor to where I could shoot from an angle. Then I put two where they did the most good. Blackie jumped like a buck shot through the heart and collapsed on one of the fenders.

Major Marks got up from the floor where he had been sitting in the crossfire. "I told you," he said doggedly, "that even if a gang broke in and overpowered the guards, they couldn't carry out the syrettes." He looked at Blackie curiously. "Is he dead?"

Mike Flavern walked up to the truck, thumbing a fresh clip in his gun. "I hope not," he said coldly. "He's got some talking to do before he dies."

DAWN was a dirty streak of gray in the east. Mike and I had been waiting by the bed since they had brought him down from the table.

"It's now or never," the nurse said. Blackie's face was as gray as the dawn. "He isn't going to make it."

The interne pricked his arm with a hypo, and the death pallor receded slightly. Blackie opened his eyes and focused them on Mike's face with an effort. "I was a damn fool to listen to that crazy Indian," he said. "I didn't know when I was well off. 'One last big haul,' he told me, 'and we'll both be sitting pretty for life.'"

I got out my notebook and wrote down what he said.

"Xaver was in it, then?" Mike asked.

"He planned the whole thing," Blackie said. "He came up to my place in Wisconsin two days ago wearing an Army uniform and told me that he was in charge of a warehouse where a couple of hundred grand worth of narcotics was stored."

Mike said wryly, "So that's where he holed up, eh? In the Army. And he's been holding down a nice cushy warehouse job while we've been looking for him for murder."

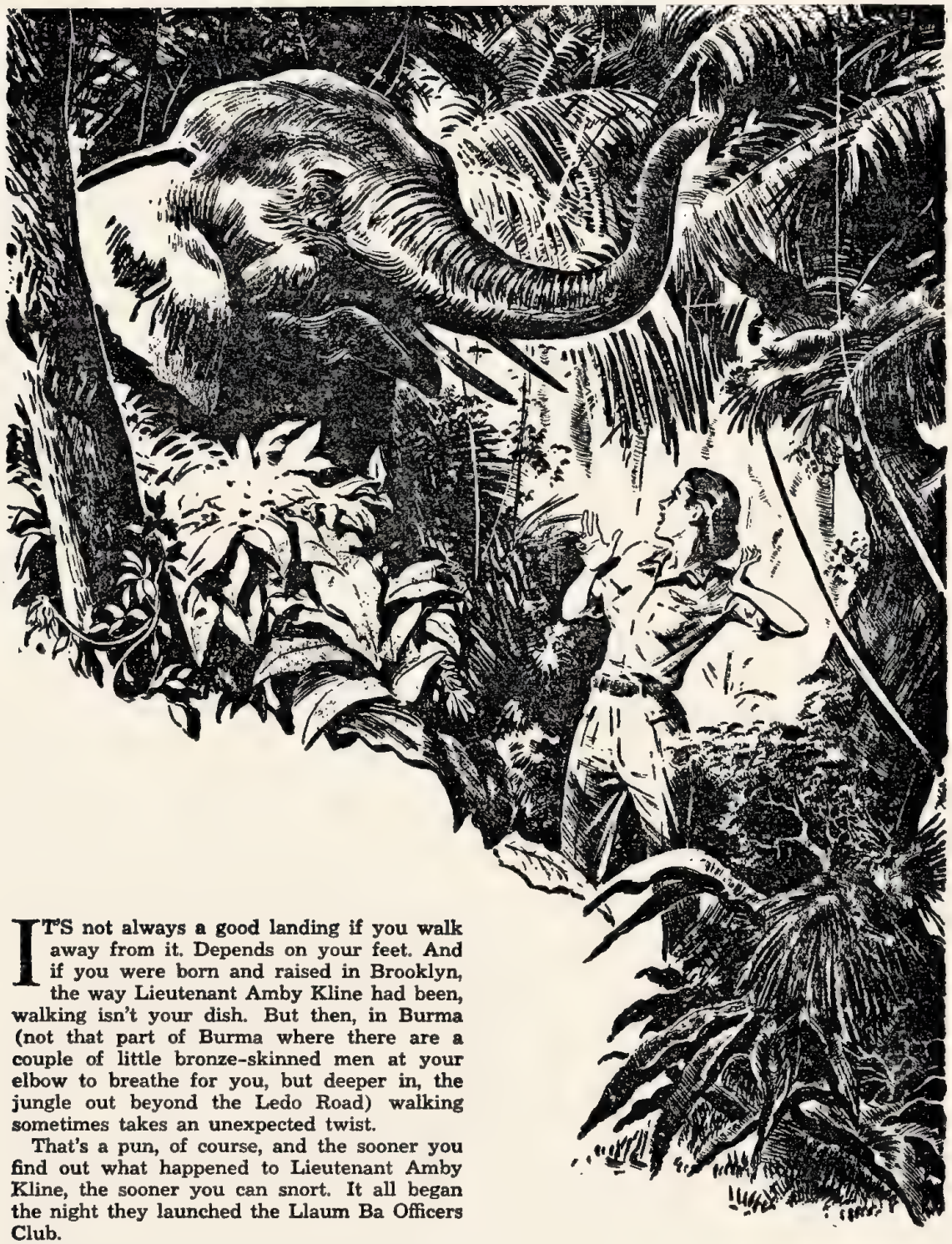
Blackie continued, doggedly, "He said it would be a pipe. He said he was sergeant of the guard and all I would have to do was drive in with a truck and some boys to load the stuff."

I wrote it down, asked, "And when was the last time that you saw Xaver?"

He said it had been two days before.

(Continued on page 146)

ILLUSTRATED BY PETER STEVENS



IT'S not always a good landing if you walk away from it. Depends on your feet. And if you were born and raised in Brooklyn, the way Lieutenant Amby Kline had been, walking isn't your dish. But then, in Burma (not that part of Burma where there are a couple of little bronze-skinned men at your elbow to breathe for you, but deeper in, the jungle out beyond the Ledo Road) walking sometimes takes an unexpected twist.

That's a pun, of course, and the sooner you find out what happened to Lieutenant Amby Kline, the sooner you can snort. It all began the night they launched the Llaum Ba Officers Club.

Lieutenant Amby, having done his nip-ups over Mandalay that noon and getting back with most of what had been his A-36 fighter-bomber —a flak hole in one wing-tip and a short burst in his empannage—was feeling pretty sharp. Not cocky, understand—that short burst had

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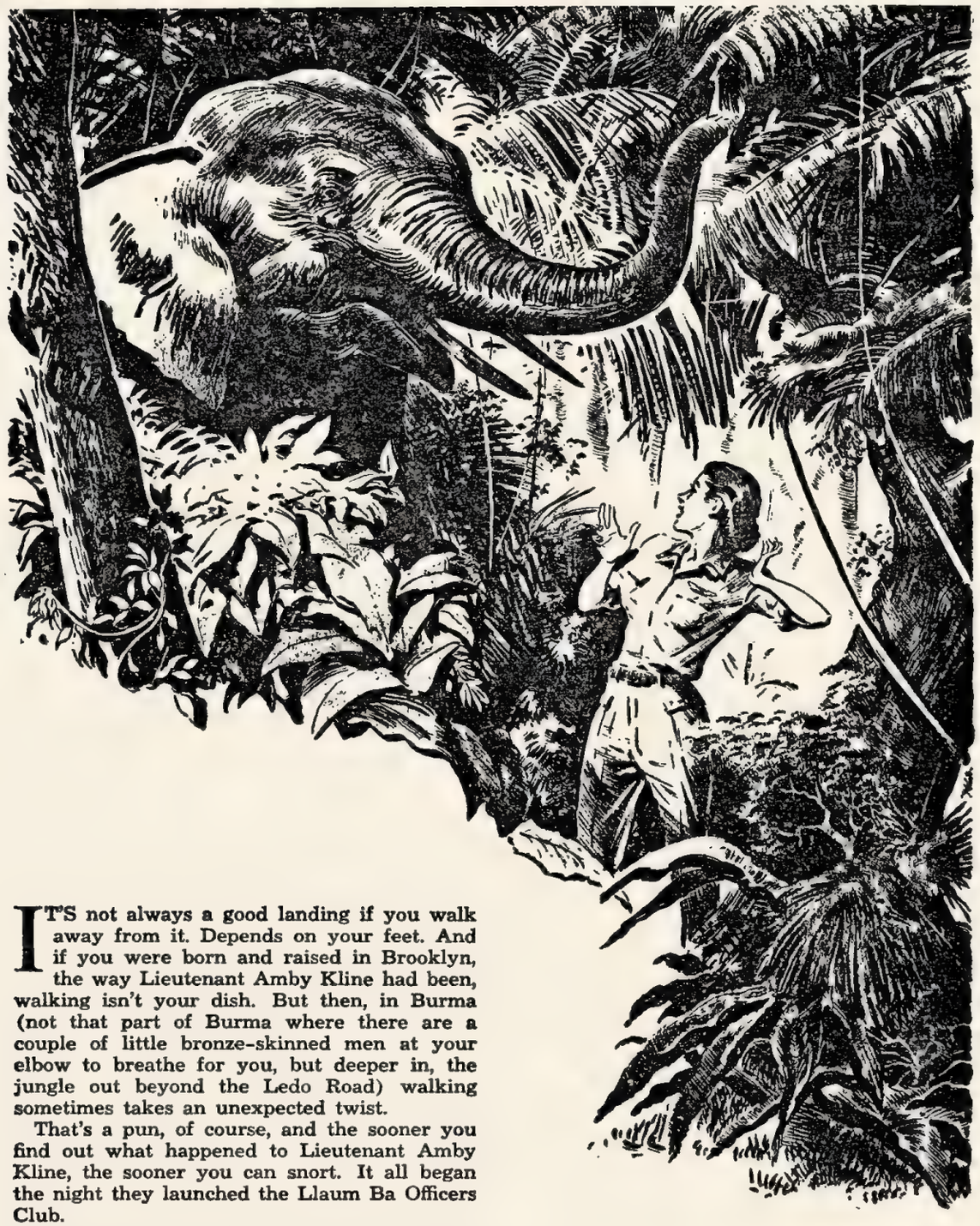
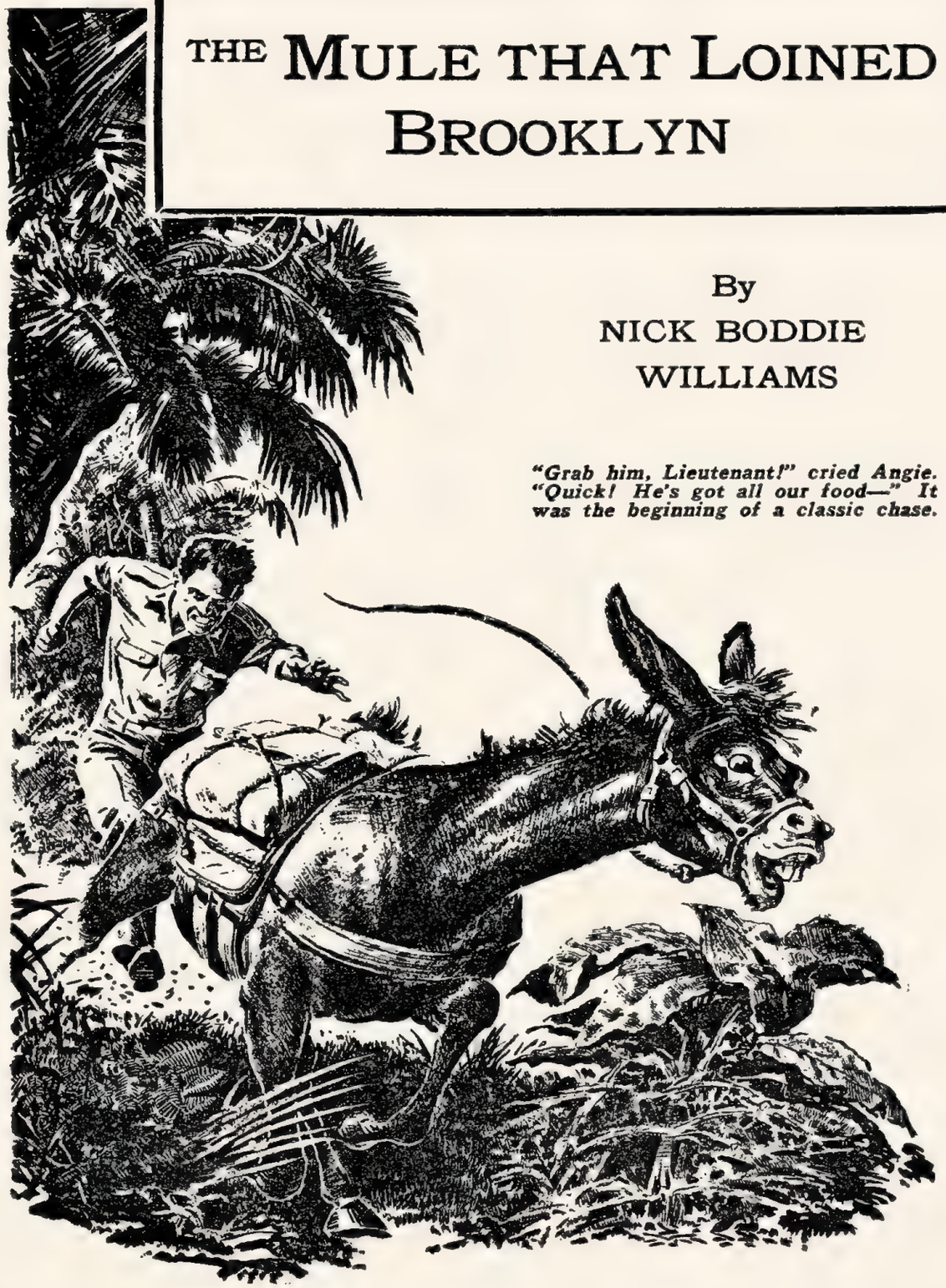


THE MULE THAT LOINED BROOKLYN

By
NICK BODDIE
WILLIAMS

"Grab him, Lieutenant!" cried Angie. "Quick! He's got all our food—" It was the beginning of a classic chase.



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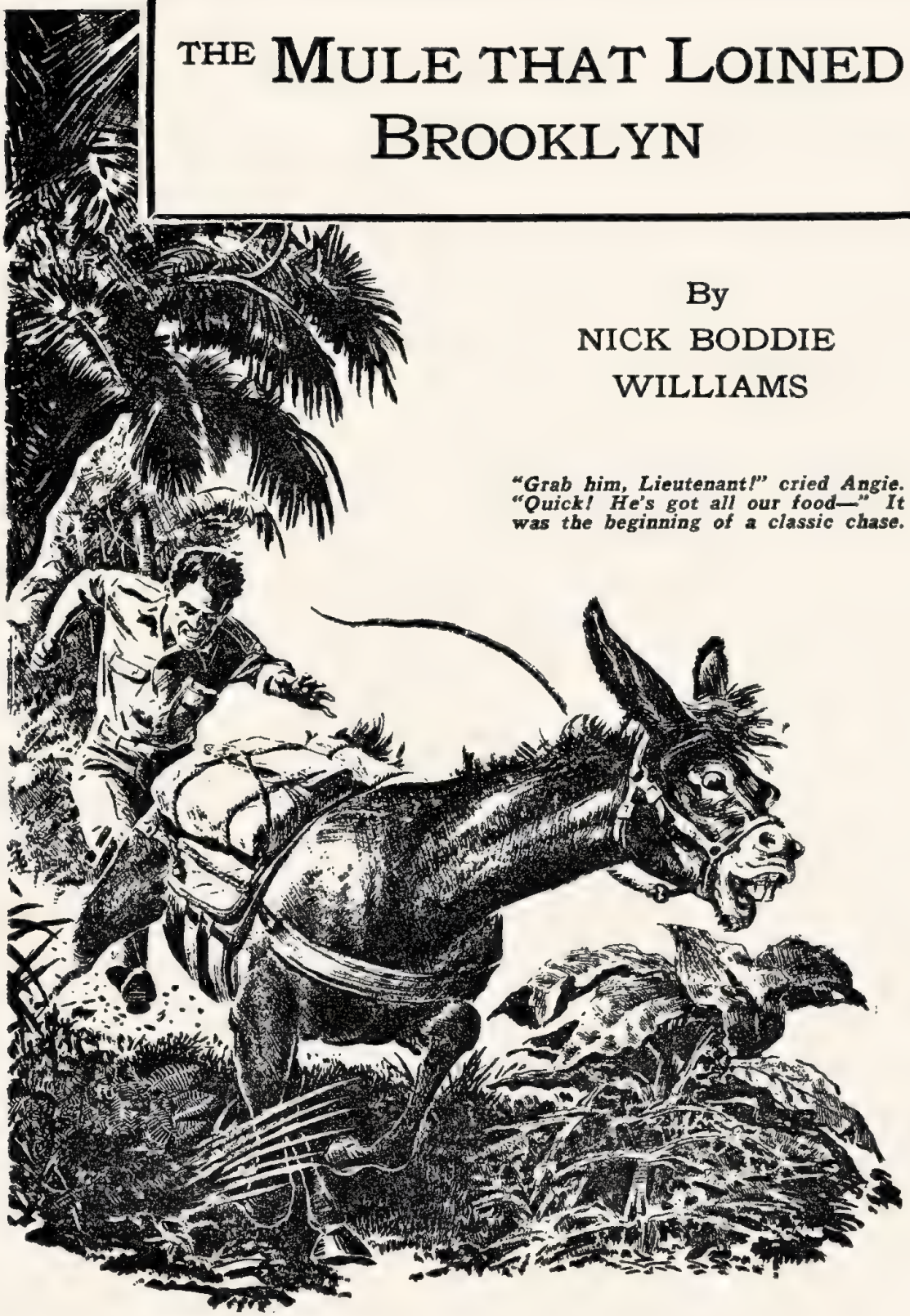

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for just a moment disconcerted him—but sharp, the way a guy from Brooklyn feels when there are women in the neighborhood. He gave a last lick to the stuff he called his hair, hoped the part that irrepressibly stood on end would stay stuck, looked twice into his barracks mirror and then winked.

"Too bad," he sighed, thinking of women's broken hearts. No special woman, understand—just any woman, every woman. He was set to kill.

So primed, he started for the Llaum Ba Officers Club, an architectural curiosity of pine and tin from which already issued shrieks that could be only Harry James, not quite in person but almost as hot, spared for eternity in wax. "Di-voon," Lieutenant Amby sighed, and then he stopped.

The road between his splendid person and the Officers Club was cluttered up. Dust rose and settled on him in dark layers. Something screamed.

"Why, what the hell?" Lieutenant Amby muttered. "Donkeys!"

"Donkeys!" said someone scornfully. "Mules!"

Lieutenant Amby turned. The voice was nice—scornful but nice. She had red hair, pulled tight, and then that Air Evac nurse uniform, pulled tighter yet. At least in places.

"What's the diff?" he asked, prolonging things.

"The difference," she said, "between Brooklyn and Arkansas. Considerable. Pull in your neck, I'm passing through."

Lieutenant Amby, standing obscured in mule dust, watched her move familiarly between the fore and aft of two slow-plodding animals. She might get kicked. She might get rammed. She must be punchy to tempt fate like that, for anybody who had heard about those mules, plodding the Ledo Road to Myitkyina, knew they were murderous. It was, really, sort of a myth that they would ever reach the front. They had no use for Burma, anyway. It wasn't their idea of life to lug mortars and radios and 75-mm. shells. It made them kind of mad. And being a cautious guy when both his feet were on the ground, Lieutenant Amby never would have risked—well, Air Evac or not, red hair or not, she must be tetched. A little scrambled in the conk. But nice.

"So here you are, all pressed and greased," Lieutenant Hank Morgan hailed him into the Officers Club. "What hung you up?"

"Mules," said Lieutenant Amby Kline. "Millions of mules. What's in the oven?"

"Why, there's that little brunette Red Cross—"

"Not my type. No carrot tops?"

Lieutenant Hank stroked his chin reflectively. "Maybe you should take up reconnaissance. She just flew in an hour ago."

"It's destiny, tot," Lieutenant Amby said. "Come to the pernt."

"That's her, Angie Haynes. Behind Major Lewis, there. You catch that curve?"

LIEUTENANT AMBY was two strides away. All the advantages of being born in Brooklyn, such as dauntlessness, prompted his tapping hand.

"Excuse me, Major. Well! Hi, Arkansas."

The red hair gleamed. Long lashes flickered over ultra-violet eyes. "Why, it's the donkey man. Shoo, donkey man. Major, did you say we were having punch?"

Lieutenant Amby stalked back to the wall. With dignity. "It's not," he told Lieutenant Hank, "that I can't stand a brush. Why, what's one chick? The sea is full of chicks. There's four of 'em in Brooklyn writing to me, wanting to set that date. There's two in Phoenix, where I was on bi-motors, and one at least in Texas at that oxygen school. At least. What do I care about a henna rinse from Arkansas?" His fingers snapped. "Add it—it's nothing to me. Zero, see? The double naught. How did she know I was from Brooklyn?"

"It sticks out on you when you talk."

"So she don't like my yap? What do I care? Women are like—like props, replaceable. To hell with this brawl. What I need's sleep."

That should, according to the rules of organized romance, have been the end of it. Lieutenant Amby was not one to turn the other cheek. And it's quite possible that it would have been written off in heaven where such matters are arranged that way. Except that on his way back next morning from over Rangoon, Lieutenant Amby stopped another short burst, this time in his coolant system. Fire, inevitably, came next. He nursed the thing along until his feet began to fry, and then he hit the silk.

One man, on foot, makes very little difference in the way a jungle looks. And to the boys of Fighter-Bomber Squadron 42, later that day, it made no difference at all. Somewhere, down there, beneath that bilious mass of malaria-infested greenery, presumably Lieutenant Amby Kline of Brooklyn was trekking out. But just presumably, because—a fact that none lost sight of—there were Japs. And there were tigers, crocodiles and pythons, swamps and several different tribes of natives, some not prone to human kindness, unless making trophies out of heads is kind.

Lieutenant Hank Morgan was first to land. As soon as he was finished with Intelligence, he started walking off dejectedly. A light hand snagged his arm.

"No luck?" she asked.

"No, ma'am."

The ultra-violet eyes were darker for a moment. "When you find him, Lieutenant, tell him—well, I've got to go. A flight of boys from Myitkyina, New Delhi-bound. I may not get

back, you never know. So tell him to write Lieutenant Angie Haynes." And then she gave an A.P.O. address.

"Yes, ma'am," Lieutenant Hank agreed. "I'll tell him that."

"Just so I'll know that he got out, of course. Because—well, I feel kind of bad that on his last night—"

Across the base, the roaring motors of a C-47 transport cut her short. She grabbed her bag and ran. The big plane swallowed her, then took off toward the east.

It was next morning that they spotted Lieutenant Amby Kline. From where his parachute was dangling from a tree, he'd made six miles. He had two hundred more to go to reach the base. And any party going toward him from the base would take a chance of ambush that no commanding officer, wishing to keep his rank, could dare permit. There was one answer—drop him food and drink, small arms and ammunition, and then watch and wait. Lieutenant Hank, circling above the ant-like motioning below that was Leutenant Amby Kline, dropped all these things by parachute, and just by way of cheering Amby up, dived twice buzzing the banyan tops. The wave from down below, while not derisive, had something of the Brooklyn bird in it. And yet it wasn't comical. There were those Japs and crocodiles and swamps. . .

BACK at the Llaum Ba base, Lieutenant Hank came in too fast, swerved, saw something gray and stubborn in his path, swerved left, ground-looped and scrambled out, shouting his special brand of Kansas cussing.

"Dang it! Who let those dad-blamed—What the crazy heck!"

The mule, unscathed, brayed back at him. It was enough to try a Kansan's patient soul. But at that moment someone touched his arm. Spinning, he saw across the field the whale-like belly of a C-47, and, pleasantly nearer, the flame-like hair and ultra-violet eyes of Angie Haynes.

"Short trip, Lieutenant. Any luck? I mean about Lieutenant Kline."

"Yes, ma'am," Lieutenant Hank said, rubbing reflectively on his chin. "Fact is, I sort of got the basis suddenly of a big idea—"

It was a big idea, all right. Only a Kansan, trying to get a girl from Arkansas to help a guy from Brooklyn beat the Burma jungle could have thought of it. It hinged upon what lay before him on the base—a Missouri mule, and a C-47 transport plane.

"If we could drop that mule to Amby, now, he'd have a chance. He could ride out. Maybe this month, maybe in less—"

Angie looked practical. "That mule won't bounce and probably won't fly."

But Kansas ingenuity was running wild. "Now, look—we'll load him in that C-47, connect him with three parachutes on a static line, the way the paratroopers jump, and shove him out."

"But I can just see that smart-aleck Brooklyn Romeo—"

"Me, too," Hank said, and grinned. "That's what's so good."

It took finagling. The mule might have been Man O'War considering the paper work required to borrow him. And then there was the detail of the transport plane. Angie worked

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BLACK MASK

busily for half an hour and someone cracked, there being nothing quite so irresistible as an Air Evac. At five o'clock the transport plane, loaded with crew and Angie, Hank and mule, the last under protest, roared aloft.

An hour had passed before the pilot located Lieutenant Amby Kline, still wallowing toward the north, with five miles made that day.

"Fly low," Hank ordered, "and then make a bombing run. I'll drop this thing on Amby's neck."

Below, a hand waved up at them, less jaunty now. The transport's crewman joined with Hank in pushing on the mule. Not pushing where a push would work the best, for mules' posteriors are notorious, but sort of from the side, sort of relying on the power of suggestion.

"Harder," Hank grunted. "Else we'll overshoot!"

Women have confidence. Women are scornful of the vainly struggling male. Particularly are these statements true regarding Air Evacs. Angie, across the plane, contemptuous, could not restrain herself. She flung her hundred and twenty pounds against the mule where it would do the most good. The mule, dismayed, leaped forward suddenly. And Angie's follow-through, unbroken by Hank's grasping fists, shot her into the blue.

She got one glimpse of the gray underbelly of the plane, then she was hurtling through the parachutes that bore the mule. She clutched the metal handle of her ripcord. Then, mad and ignobly, she went drifting down alongside him.

Lieutenant Amby, watching, blinked. What kind of war was this one, anyway? Mules dropping from the sky—was there nothing that GHQ would stop at? Wasn't he encumbered enough? What did they take him for, a ding-danged—well! And women, too!

When Angie Haynes came blundering through the underbrush, she found Lieutenant Amby squatting by a water hole, trying to get that hair of his to lie down flat. Fists on her hips, she glared.

"Well, porcupine!" she snapped, unflattered. "Playing beauty parlor?"

Lieutenant Amby jerked erect. "Hi, kid. How's tricks?"

"Is that all you can say when I've—when I've—" For just a moment, tears were imminent. "Oh, come on—help me get this mule out of a tree."

"Comes mules in trees," Lieutenant Amby smirked. "Comes queens in parachutes. This ain't a half-bad jungle."

"No? Just wait until the typhoid bugs swimming in that water hole—"

He raised his palm. "I know you'd noice me back to health. I can just see myself, lying in some rude hut, my poor head pillowed in your lap, while you with gentle hand are laving my fevered brow—"

"I'll lave," she snapped, "all but your fevered brow!" She waved a stick that could be ebony. "Come on—get moving, Wonderful! Rescue that mule."

"But on a pinnacle at a time like this—what's a mule?"

"It's transportation. Move!"

Lieutenant Amby swaggered off, intensely sharp. Of course the kid was playing shy, being alone with him two hundred miles from—hey! Two hundred miles! And Japs! And crocodiles! And swamps!

"Which way?" he yelled. "Snap into it! Which way—that mule?"

The mule, swaying six feet above the ground, looked placidly upon them, flapped its ears, and went on chewing on a leafy bough. People were crazy. Absolutely nuts. Churning about, excited, making noise, when any mule could see this was the way to live. Nothing to tote, not even any weight upon the hoofs. But all dreams end. Lieutenant Amby's knife slashed through the suspending shrouds, and down into the ooze the mule came plummeting. So they were going to work him, where they? Ha! And ha!

IT was noon of the following day when Lieutenant Hank spied out the party on the ground. So far as he could see, a flame-topped girl was standing with her fists jammed hard against her hips, Lieutenant Amby Kline was tugging violently on a mouse-gray quadruped, and they had made, during the night and morning, maybe half a mile.

Morgan to base, "Something's gone wrong. They only made a half a mile. Over."

Base to Morgan, "Is Kline being a gentleman? Over."

Morgan to base, "Regarding which? Over."

Static. And then the base, "Drop him some stuff and get away from there. That party's big enough. Over."

Amby, squinting up, saw Hank's A-36 wheeling away, and a groan the like of which is rarely heard outside of Ebbetts Field rose in the Burma air.

"And me," he cried, striking his brow, "stuck with this—"

"Lieutenant!" Angie snapped.

"It's not you, kid, it's this—"

"Lieutenant!"

What he said next is utterly unprintable. Angie stuck hasty fingers in her ears. "Not bad," she said, commenting on the part that she had heard. "Not bad—you'll make a mule-skinner yet. Of course in Canaan, that's in Arkansas—"

Amby let go the mule. The mule's ears twitched. "Canaan? Never hoid of it."

"It never heard of you. But there, when they

say these things to a mule, they get results. I think, Lieutenant, it's the accent."

"You mean me saying berl in erl?"

"Of course. Or when you call this mule a joik—"

"I should say juhk! That mammy talk!"

"Oh, well—"

"Let him loin Brooklyn!" Amby raged, and grabbed an ear. The mule bared yellow teeth. Amby went skittering. "You cannibal! That hoit."

At noon next day Lieutenant Hank was circling overheard. Sadly, he spoke into his mike.

Morgan to base, "They made two miles. Angie is sitting on a stump. Amby is prodding with a ten-foot pole. The mule's asleep."

Base to Morgan, "Drop a calendar. Maybe they'd like to know what year it is."

Morgan to base, "The mule is not asleep. He's just kicked Amby in a pond."

Base to Morgan, "Drop some arnica. Is Angie on the job?"

Morgan to base, "Angie still on the stump. But rolling off. Seems happy over it. Over."

Amby, mud in his eyes, grated his teeth as Hank went racing north. Looking at Angie shaking on the ground, his jaw shot out antagonistically.

"It's funny, hey? I'm kicked, I'm split in two, it's funny, hey? O.K., you keep the mule, you talk that Canaan minstrel talk to it! See you in Bombay, kid!"

He came up running. Angie stared. She'd never seen a man from Brooklyn with his dander up. It was—for the moment before he vanished—quite a sight. And then, sober, she wandered to the mule and scratched its ears.

"You oughtn't to have kicked him, son," she crooned. "Patience. And tolerance. He can't help where he was born. Now he's gone whamming off and maybe he will bust his neck. Ashamed?" The mule's ears sagged. His head sunk closer to the swampy ground. "Patience," sighed Angie, picking up a switch, and then gently she tapped the mule's fat rump. Almost inaudibly her voice lapsed into country talk. Back-country talk. "Git up, thar, son! Haw, mule—gol-darn it, haw!"

The mule nodded and moved. Forward, toward Llaum Ba.

DUSK came. Rather, dusk fell. To be precise, dusk plummeted. Within an instant, deep beneath those trees, the sky was dark. Angie, using supplies that Amby had abandoned, lit a fire. She opened up C rations, filled a tin with water, boiled it beyond the probability of germs, prepared to eat. Odors arose that to the inner woman had a luscious smell. The mule, content, munched boughs. All was serene. Then suddenly, out of the brush, a man came screaming.

Snake! And holy, what a snake! Long as a submarine."

"Python?" said Angie, chewing chocolate.

"Python!" howled Amby. "Look it had big eyes—"

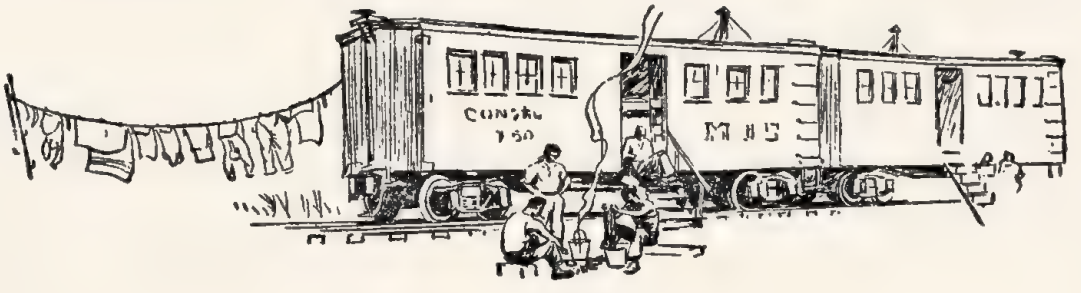
"And such big teeth, grandmaw. Pull up a chair. Soup's on."

Amby looked critical. "I see you've still got that infoinal mule."

"In Canaan, we look after mules. We try to keep them happy and content."

"Canaan!" he sneered. And then, "Smells good, kind of. Got plenty?"

"Not if you're going whamming off to Bombay again."



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"O.K.," said Amby, looking meek. "O.K.—I'll stick. You need protection, anyway. From snakes."

"From wolves," she said, and primly passed a pannikin.

The night was very cold. But it passed presently. Amby got up stiffly from the ground. Angie was standing by the mule.

"Load it," she said. "Drive it."

"Who, me?"

"You wouldn't want a girl to swear like that?"

The jaw, the Brooklyn jaw, was out again. Amby was picking up a ten-foot pole. "O.K.," he snapped, "I'll drive it, see? Just you stand back—"

"Hold it, Lieutenant! Not with that."

"Well, holy mackerel, kid, with what?"

"With kindness."

"Ah," Amby said. "Come, mule. Come, muley-wewly—tum, tum, tum. Des walk."

"Halfwit," snapped Angie.

Amby minced. "Tum, iddle mule. Else Papa'll break oo dod-dabbed neck."

"Ridiculous!"

"Ain't it? Ah, what the—"

Something crashed. The underbrush beyond them came alive. Lieutenant Amby's stiff hair absolutely oscillated as he stared. A long and snaky thing protruded, raised itself, and then pushed out. Behind it came the rest of what was an elephant.

The elephant looked at the mule, its little pig eyes very, very wide. The mule looked at the elephant. Both of them froze and shivered in their tracks. The elephant cracked first. Throwing its snaky trunk aloft, it trumpeted. The mule, backing, let out a bray. And then they wheeled in utter horror. That way went the elephant. South, and fast, galloped the mule.

"Grab him," cried Angie. "Quick, Lieutenant—grab him! He's got all our food—"

It was a classic chase. It ended shortly after noon, just as Lieutenant Hank came roaring overhead, making his daily check on them.

Morgan to base, "Something's gone sour. They're back where Amby hit the silk."

Base to Morgan, "You'd think the mule would have more sense."

Morgan to base, "They don't look up. They're looking at each other. Guess they like it there."

Base to Morgan, "O.K., wisenheimer—don't get palpitations, peeking. Come on in."

Below, beneath this overcast of persiflage, something that spoke well for the human race was happening. For man, beaten, winded and crushed to earth, was using brains to battle his environment. On such activity depends the species' fate. Of such is the glory of the millenium. Amby, sweat pouring out of him, stared glumly at the mule. Angie, panting, stood by his side, scorn gleaming from her ultra-violet eyes.

"You—you!" she gasped. "You wouldn't grab! And so we lose nine miles. Oh, you! Of all the—"

Outward thrust the jaw. Amby stood up. And something almost masterful came over him.

"Get on that mule," he rasped.

"Get on that—you've lost your poor—"

"Get on that mule!"

"Why, you—" And then, that miracle of miracles, woman's capitulation. "If you wish, Lieutenant, but I still don't see—"

"Get on that mule!"

Meekly, she climbed upon the mule's back. Dour, the mule submitted, flattening its ears. More funny business, eh? Well, ha! And ha!

Amby picked up a sack of rations and then climbed up behind, one arm encircling Angie's middle. Then . . .

Morgan to base, "They're off! And how they're off, both on the mule—Jehoshaphat!"

IT was the second day of the third week afterward that something jogged onto the dusty strip at Llaum Ba. Cheers went booming to the Burma skies. Lieutenant Hank, first across the field, helped Angie get down from the mule. No Air Evac had ever looked so tired, nor any ultra-violet eyes reflected such adoring tenderness. Lieutenant Amby, grim about the lips, and very masterful, said only, "Where's the barn?"

"What barn!" Lieutenant Hank asked. "Oh—for that?"

"Well, not for me, chum, soitainly. I want a bed with blankets on it. And a razor. And a bath."

Still grim, but just a little punchy, off he rode. The mule kept looking back uneasily. Very uneasily.

"He's gorgeous, isn't he?" sighed Angie, in a dream.

Lieutenant Hank was helping her to walk. He was amazed at her adoring tone. "Funny, I thought you'd hate the guy, being marooned with him so long."

"Hate him?" she sighed, not loud, for drowsiness was settling on her fast. "Why, I—he's marvelous. Why, back in Canaan anyone who could get what Amby has gotten from a mule . . . It takes some mighty smart—"

Loud, ear-splitting, came a shriek that sounded like an elephant. The mule plunged forward, galloping. Amby clung on. And even Angie, walking, tensed her knees as if to keep from being thrown.

"There, now," she sighed. "That's how he does it—trumpeting. The mule thinks it's an elephant again, and then—well, it's amour, Lieutenant. Love. Both ways, he says. I'm sure a lucky goil—"

DECORATION BY RAY BETHERS

TYPICAL TROPICAL TRAMPS

A Fact Story

By EDGAR YOUNG

WE ROVERS who ramble the countries south of the Rio Grande are called Three T's, or Typical Tropical Tramps, and it is a title we are more or less proud of. It was duly conferred upon the unorganized brotherhood one night at Zacapa, Guatemala, when several noted trail-hitters happened to be together. Ed Burke, an extremely well-educated man and as great a rambler as the best of us, went through the motions of forming our breed into a sort of society, clique, or association. Ed was a great wag and the alliterative title seemed to appeal to him and to the others who happened to be wassailing in a thatched *cantina* across the tracks. Ed rambled from job to job just as the rest of us did but he usually caught on as general manager, superintendent, or in some other official capacity. At this time he was chief train dispatcher for the Northern Railroad.

Nowhere else in the world could a man be a ragged vagabond one day and the next become an official of a railroad, a fruit company, a gold mine, or oilfield; but down there, then, it could happen. As a matter of fact I had seen Ed Burke just a short time before away up in Mexico. With him at the time was a Mexican tatterdemalion and they were both in the last stages of inebriation and Ed asked me to stake him to two *centavos* so they could buy another drink of fermented cactus juice. I parted with a slick dime and the next time I laid eyes on Ed was after I had walked a thousand miles and arrived there at Zacapa, Guatemala. I went in to see the chief dispatcher about a job and sitting there, very precise, smug, in well-tailored whites was Ed, as dignified a railroad official as one would care to see. He never drank a drop while he was working but when he quit, which was usually after a few months on the job, he got drunk and he stayed drunk until he was broke and had begged the last native penny he could. Then he would hit another trail for several hundred miles and go to work as an official again.

In a way it was too bad. He was an alcoholic and all that sort of thing, but had he been otherwise he wouldn't have been Ed Burke. The Typical Tropical Tramps are not typical of anything in particular except that Ed Burke did a typical Ed Burke stunt when he formed the organization and conferred the title upon us.

I just barely missed being a charter member for I was the next trail-hitter to arrive and I was duly made a member by Ed and the gang, but I was not there the night the organization was formed. I know that Ed Burke met his end during a flood on a tributary of the upper Amazon. He was drinking and got on a raft and shoved off with the intention of going down river to the next camp, but he was drowned. This was during the construction of

a railroad around some falls on the Madeira River, and many years have passed since then.

THERE had been tropical trail-hitters long before Ed Burke formed the organization and I guess the custom of tramping from job to job first started when American companies began operating mines, railroads, and other enterprises in Mexico and Central America. Panama to the south and the Rio Grande on the north, all of Mexico and all of Central America, was the region traveled by the itinerant workers. In the United States at the time were tramp printers, tramp telegraphers, and other roving workmen; but in this section of Latin America the rovers, if I may be pardoned for saying so, were a higher grade of people, better educated, extremely versatile and very proficient—not only at *one* trade but at *any* trade, craft, or occupation.

True, the individual TTT had not always been thus, for at the very beginning of his meanderings he usually just knew one trade or occupation, but by having his nerve with him and taking any job that happened to be open he soon became a proficient office man, a foreman, cook, railroad engineer, skilled mechanic where skilled mechanics were needed, and superintendent of some particularly difficult construction job. Few were ex-soldiers but most of us had picked up enough to be able to drill native barefoots and to lead them in battle, and some TTT's, including myself, have held high commissions in native armies and navies.

The expression "Jack of all Trades" may occur to those who do not know Typical Tropical Tramps at first hand, but "Master of many Trades" would be more fitting. The Typical Tropical Tramps had their pride and it was their boast that they could hold any job they could get and they almost always could get hold of a job no matter what it was. It takes nerve to hire out to do something you know nothing about but no matter how difficult the work is the first few hours it gets easier, and in a few days you are going along O.K.

Back when Ed Burke formed the organization there were just a few places down in South America where men of our type could catch on. First was the G & Q Railroad running from the port of Duran, across the river at Guayaquil, Ecuador, up the Andes and across the highlands to Quito. Guayaquil at present is called "The Pearl of the Pacific" and it has been sanitated, cleaned up, and is not half bad; but back then it was the main source, on the Pacific side, of yellow fever, bubonic, and various other plagues; and it was then known as "The Graveyard of South America."

The country south of the Panama Railroad (there was no canal then) was infested for the two hundred miles to the Colombian border by San Blas Indians, who at that time were actually, or supposedly, ferocious; and while some TTT's tried to make the trip by trail, none ever arrived at the other end. The country bordering Panama in Colombia was no whit better at the time and there is good reason to believe that American and English explorers and orchid hunters were killed by Indians on the Atrato and other rivers in this region. At the present time the San Blas are friendly to whites, provided the white is not there at sundown, and the Colombian Indians near the Panama boundary have changed their ways.

Thus, if a TTT did get to Guayaquil and if he worked for the G&Q a while, he was considered slightly above average by the rest of us, for he had dared risk the plagues and in some manner he had managed to get there and work and get away again with a whole skin.

There was also the job at Cerro de Pasco, Peru, up and over the Andes from Lima, where the Cerro de Pasco Copper Company of New York operated a large mine and smelter and quite a railroad of its own. Those who had worked at Cerro were said to have gone up the hill, and it was quite a hill for the tunnel through the Andes was 15,865 feet above sea level at Ticlio and down at Fundicion and Cerro it was slightly less, some 14,200 and 14,400. The trip required a good heart but if one could stand it he would find remunerative employment and an excellent lot of Americans and other white foreigners to pardner with.

Thus, back at that time, Cerro de Pasco was the Ultima Thule for we TTT's in a southern direction. Nevertheless those of the TTT's who had more than ordinary mining experience did manage to go on over into Bolivia and get official positions with the various native companies who ran the tin mines; for at the time the whole tin industry was operated under the management of a native Bolivian who was reputedly ten times as rich as John D. Rockefeller, and this rumor may have been true.

It was only one TTT out of a thousand who managed to get on down to the rainless desert of northern Chile and get work in the nitrate fields where many small companies were mining crude saltpeter and exporting it abroad. In a way, a TTT who got that far was entirely out of bounds, and it was a very long way back to Central America where he could sit in some *cantina* and tell the gang about his experiences.

It was later and in my own time that other developments started in so many places that a man could not only move from job to job in Mexico and Central America and always find lucrative employment; but it became possible for him to move from job to job, making much longer hops between them, and work all over the South American continent.

They struck oil in Colombia and several big camps started. American dredging outfits went down to dredge gold on the upper Magdalena

and Cauca. Some American contractors took road building jobs in the highlands. Similar things happened in Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Agentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and here and there in Brazil which is a country larger than continental United States.

A more varied field for the TTT! As an oil worker he began at the top and hired as drill operator, tool sharpener, and expert pipe line worker. He hired to run dredges as engineer or to be superintendent of the operation. He suddenly become a skilled operator of new construction machinery and at good wages was running bull-dozers, spreaders, steam shovels, and such things.

Or, if there should be no opening in such occupations he would try being chief clerk, manager of a commissary, or take charge of the eating house. No matter what it was, just mention the job that was open and if the pay was right the TTT was the man. And he almost always made good for he had his pride, his nerve, his gift of gab, and behind him was a background of various other difficult jobs he had undertaken and held.

HAD these additional enterprises not started opening a new field for itinerant workers about the time I got ready to quit my job in Panama, I would doubtless have returned up through Central America, working jobs here and there and trail-hitting on, until finally I would have arrived in Mexico as a journeyman TTT who had served his apprenticeship in the usual way and was now a respected member of the clan.

As a matter of fact, I didn't get back to Central America for many years, because the jumps are long in South America and time after time I managed to land jobs with such salaries attached to them that I hated to quit; and it was sometimes a year before I could get going. In a way I became another Ed Burke for I graduated into a TTT who could take a job of superintendent of construction and other things and get away with it. I became a proficient accountant from having bluffed so many jobs here and there. I hired at the top time after time and on many jobs I made a thousand five hundred U. S. dollars a month. But I did manage to keep going for after all I was just a TTT, and if I know what a TTT is, the letters stand for the single word ADVENTURER.

In other words we just worked jobs in order to get here and there and to see things and to gain some experience and knowledge and maybe some wisdom. We learned things at first hand by being face to face with them and dealing with them personally. We had to learn Spanish, and many of us learned Portuguese. It whets the mind to be suddenly in a position where the details of some sort of machinery must be solved in order to operate it, and it adds to experience to meet new people day after day, month after month, year after year. We worked at all sorts of work and we met all grades of people and got a slant at the world through all sorts of viewpoints.

Back then, in order to see Mexico, Central and South America, the West Indies, it was almost necessary to do it the way we TTT's did in order to do it at all. Conditions now are different and there is not a great deal to be gained by walking from Texas to Panama, for the process takes time. The world has moved up a notch and those who wish to travel do not need to do it the slow and hard way. There are ships going to Latin America, also planes, and there are railroads, buses, air transport, in all those countries to get up into the interior once you are down there.

Nevertheless, no matter how one is able to get to these countries and to travel about them and meet the people, it is plenty worth all it costs and the time it takes. Each Latin American country has topography and scenery that is worth viewing, and you'd be surprised just what there is to meet up with down that way.

Hasta la vista!

ILLUSTRATED BY
L. STERNE STEVENS

CHAINS FOR COLUMBUS

By
ALFRED POWERS

THE STORY THUS FAR:

IT IS the year 1500 and COLUMBUS, the great Admiral of the Ocean Sea, idol of the populace but victim of the jealousy of FONSECA and other court officials, is being returned to Spain fettered like a common felon to stand charges of treason. Young FRANCISCO PEREZ, the narrator of the story, and his friends CORTES and GOMEZ, nicknamed "Pieces-of-Eight," make the mistake of firing a salute to the returning navigator and Francisco finds himself, along with PICO, Columbus' cannoneer, in the toils of the Inquisition. They have been caught by Fonseca's agents while attempting to deliver a letter from Columbus to his sponsor Queen Isabella. The fact that Pico's parrot, imported from the New World, keeps repeating the cryptic words, *Lord, my lord, my great lord Montezuma,* is taken as an indication that Columbus has forsaken allegiance to his king and faith and accepted some strange new god and master.

ZORILLA, the Inquisition's Cadiz torturer, seeks unavailingly to obtain evidence against

With his foot reaching as far** as his chains would allow, **Zorilla kicked out and the parrot's cage went sailing into the sea.

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ZORILLA, the Inquisition's Cadiz torturer, seeks unavailingly to obtain evidence against

***With his foot reaching as far** as his chains would allow, Zorilla kicked out and the parrot's cage went sailing into the sea.*

Columbus and admissions of guilt from Francisco and Pico, both of whom are removed by the dread tribunal to Seville to be executed by the *auto-da-fé*. They escape the death by fire, however, when the judge, about to pronounce sentence, is stricken by the plague. They manage to rejoin Cortes and Pieces-of-Eight who tell them they have managed to deliver Columbus' secret letter to the queen and that the admiral is now free. They join Columbus and accompany him to Granada to plead his cause before Ferdinand and Isabella. There in the great Alhambra Palace, Columbus exhibits his chains—the fetters have become a symbol to him of the nation's ingratitude and he vows always to carry them with him—and wins permission from the queen to make a fourth voyage of discovery. Fonseca, however, wins the king's ear and poisons his mind against the project. Francisco overhears them plotting to discredit Columbus and reports to the admiral what he has heard. Because, as a boy, Francisco has worked in the gun powder factory of BERNARDO CRUZ, Columbus signs Francisco up for the voyage and delegates him to purchase the necessary powder and ordnance for the expedition. One of his old co-workers, EMILIO, is also signed on the ship's roll. It is difficult to find satisfactory crews so Columbus is forced to accept the dregs of the waterfront. He signs on one CARLOS ROBLES, without investigating his background, and when the fleet is ready to sail Francisco and Pico see the man for the first time. He is Zorilla, the Cadiz torturer, obviously aboard to act as a spy for Fonseca and the king.

PART III

PICO and I argued with Columbus against taking Zorilla and five others who signed with him.

"Fonseca is sending him," said Pico, "him and the five others. Drop them. They are going for no other purpose than to make trouble. We know him. In all Spain you could not find a more objectionable creature, short of Fonseca himself. He is the torturer for the Cadiz Inquisition. By Hurtado's cat, I have promised myself to wring his neck at the first opportunity. It will be a big mistake to take him, Great Admiral. He is Fonseca's agent, Fonseca's spy."

"Fonseca's spy, Fonseca's spy, Fonseca's spy," gabbled the parrot.

"You are asking me to remove these six from the roll. After all my experiences with dregs of humans, you may think it strange that I do not listen," Columbus said, "but we must have crews for the four ships. If we are short of men, the ones we have will quit. And I have waited long."

"It is far better, then, Great Admiral, to get six convicts."

"I do not agree," said Columbus. "On board ship, this Carlos Robles, or Zorilla, as you call him, will be under my control, absolutely subject to my discipline, mine and the captain's and the mate's. And know that Captain Diego Tristan of the *Capitana* is grim in compelling obedience. Even if sent by Fonseca, what can the man do? Possibly he wishes to get away from the distasteful work of the Inquisition, is indeed fleeing from it. Men often go to sea to cleanse their spirits."

"Do you believe such a thing possible with Zorilla?" exclaimed Pico. "Please listen to me, Great Admiral. The man enjoys torture; to hear the cries and supplications of his victims; to see their anguish and their agony. Believe me, the man is cruel and evil all the way through."

"Granting that he is as evil as you say, beyond change, beyond reform, is it the first time we have had to deal with evil characters? Do you remember the mutineering, sullen ones in 1492 who ordered me to turn back or they would throw me into the sea and simply report in Spain that I had fallen overboard? Do you remember Pedro Margarite and all the malcontents of the second voyage, and the rebels of the third? Of the fifteen hundred or so who have sailed with me, you, Pico, and you almost alone, have been faithful through all the leagues, all the revolts, all the years. So little does one come to expect of human constancy and fidelity that this fourth voyage would seem singularly serene and happy if Carlos Robles—or Zorilla—and his five confederates turn out to be the only ones to cause us trouble. All are strong. They can do the work of ten ordinary hands. In our desperate need we cannot drop them merely because we may mistrust them. They will be far away from Fonseca. We will have them on shipboard where exists as stern and arbitrary a government as is known among men. And you must promise me, Pico, that you will not carry on an irritable association with this Zorilla or get into brawls with him. One of you can take the port watch, and one the starboard, so it will not be necessary for you to see much of each other."

"I suppose I have to promise, Great Admiral, but I still insist it is a mistake. Day and night we will have with us Fonseca's agent, Fonseca's spy."

The parrot picked up and began repeating again the last phrase.

"Will you remove the bird?" pleaded Columbus. "I am very tired. His voice grates upon my nerves."

"Silence!" shouted Pico, throwing the black cloth over the cage, picking it up, and starting to go.

"Silence yourself, you dirty-bearded Spaniard . . . Fonseca's spy, Fonseca's spy, Fonseca's spy. . ."

CHAPTER XI

HURRICANE

JUST three months ahead of us, the new governor of Hispaniola had sailed out of Cadiz harbor in grand style—with thirty-five ships, garmented in silk and brocade, and waited upon by twenty-two esquires. Ovando was his name, replacing Bobadilla who had loaded Columbus with chains.

This pompous little Spaniard, discoverer of not so much as a rood of land in his life, was given the high position that ought to have been restored to Columbus. The admiral had even been given strict orders not to put into Santo Domingo, not to visit Hispaniola at all. It was a sardonic embargo. Now he was shut out of the only islands he had given to Spain.

He was instructed to sail past Hispaniola without stopping, and go on and on to find a strait and a shorter route than Portugal's to Cipango and Cathay and the rich and teeming cities of the Great Khan.

Cortes had intended to accompany Governor Ovando, but some escapade had caused him to miss the boat. Now he intended to leave with us, he and Pieces-of-Eight, to turn up careers for themselves in the New World. On May 7, Pieces-of-Eight duly arrived on a river boat from Seville, but not Cortes, and still no Cortes when we pulled away from the wharf on May 9.

"Some fresh brain-ferment," commented Pieces-of-Eight, who refused to come without him.

Thus we lost two good members of the crew.

Because of the limited space we took but two horses on the expedition, the sorrel and the gray Columbus had given us.

"As part of the royal equipment they become government property and should be paid for out of the founds for the fourth voyage," the admiral explained.

"But you gave them to us," I reminded him.

"They are not less Pico's and yours, not less privately owned. Will forty *castellanos* apiece be enough? Here is an order for each of you upon the treasurer for that amount. Henceforth the animals belong to Spain."

We fitted up two small cannon to be carried on their backs, and even to be fired from there if necessary. The muzzles pointed toward the flanks. Whoever aimed the guns did so by controlling the horses' heads, pivoting the beasts to the right or left as the case might be.

We referred to the cannon as Portable No. 1 and Portable No. 2. The horses were equipped with saddles, bellybands, breastbands, breeching, cruppers, neck and hip straps so as to hold the guns steady in their recoil. When we led the sorrel and gray through the streets of Cadiz with this ordnance fastened on, we attracted much attention. And at a trial firing in an open field we were attended by such a crowd as to make the matter dangerous.

Columbus had the chains with him in his cabin on the *Capitana*. We urged him to leave them behind, to let the Franciscan monastery keep them in his absence, believing they would be morbid reminders to have constantly in sight.

"No," he insisted. "I may die on this journey. If at sea and my body is given to the depths, refasten them to my legs and cast me. If on land, put them in the coffin with me, one set at my head, one set at my feet."

Since cannoneering en route amounted to little, we worked at such other seamen's duties as Captain Tristan ordered. One of these was throwing out the log-line to tell our rate of speed.

At the end of the line was a piece of wood as big as a pumpkin, weighted at the bottom and having a small red flag at the top. Pico corrected me when I referred to this as a buoy.

"You talk like a landlubber," he said. "Call it a chip. That's the nautical name."

Ten fathoms or so back from the chip was a white rag, where the real marking began with a knot thereafter every forty fathoms.

I held a minute-glass, while Pico let out the log-line, the sand beginning to run when the red-flagged chip was clear of our aft eddy and the white rag was even with the stern. The minute-glass represented one-sixtieth of an hour. The forty fathoms between knots was one-sixtieth of a Spanish league. So the number of knots carried off along the line while the sand was running out, showed exactly how many leagues we were going an hour.

Pico told me he had been in charge of the log-line of the *Santa Maria* in 1492. The admiral deceived the terrified crews. He understated the distance covered by about a sixth. Pico knew the secret but kept it. Just before they landed at San Salvador the pilot's report to the sailors was five hundred and eighty leagues from the Canaries; Columbus' real record showed seven hundred and seventy leagues.

While we were on the Grand Canary, taking on wood and water, Emilio became ill. Two days after we had got under sail, at seven bells on May 27, he died. How short had been his release when he had finally sought and found it.

He lay very still, very pitiable, all through the night. Sentinels stood watches by his side. A light burned. A screen hid him from the rest of us as watch and watch about we slumbered.

Poor Emilio!

At the end of the port morning watch at eight bells, the boatswain's pipe was sounded in a low, wailing note, long drawn out. Then he called an order.

"All hands bury the dead!"

The ship's bell tolled solemnly. The lower sails were hauled up; the speed was deadened; the hollow beat of the waves was all that broke the silence. Behind us approached the three other caravels, closer than usual, and all the sails that hung from their lower yards came down the same as ours, and the four vessels in line stood almost motionless upon the green, undulant surface of the ocean.

All this was being done for Emilio!

On deck the men were lined up in two rows, facing each other. At the head of one row was Captain Tristan. At the head of the other was the mate.

Emilio, sewed up tightly in his hammock and with the bright Spanish flag draped over him, was carried on a rude bier on the shoulders of four sailors. The pallbearers marched with soft tramp between the two rows of uncovered and silent men, and set down the bier upon two stools. A few cubits behind them walked Columbus, reading from the Bible as he went with slow steps.

I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

There at the end of the passage between our facing ranks was Emilio, with his hammock for a shroud and the flag for a pall. Around us was the vast, unsearchable sea, and here in unmistakable promise were these words sounding in our ears and hearts. Drops of rain began to fall, giving the air a freshness like dawn.

Columbus ended the ceremony by saying: "We therefore commit his body to the deep."

The drapery was lifted and retained; the hammock was pushed forward over the railing; there was a splash.

Pico and I had loaded and made ready three cannon, which we now fired in measured succession. Three volleys came at similar intervals from each of the other caravels. The reverberations faded and ceased. There succeeded them a hush upon the water and upon the ship. The waves that had parted briefly to make a sepulchre flowed on unchanged over the green immensity.

The boatswain called an order. In simultaneous whiteness uprose four great spreads of canvas. Four halted vessels in line began once more to move rapidly toward the West.

OVER this ocean route we made good speed. Five weeks from the time we left Cadiz—on June 15—we arrived at one of the Caribbees, where we remained three days, taking on wood and water, and all of us sailors doing our wash and, among us, the wash of the ships. We unloaded the horses and exercised them along the beach but let them eat only sparingly of the lush grasses so they would not get the colic.

Columbus remembered the strict command not to go to Santo Domingo, not to touch anywhere upon the shores of Hispaniola. Yet he had a leaky ship. He needed to have it repaired or exchange it for another. So we sailed straight to Santo Domingo.

"Will we come in sight of La Nividad, the lost colony?" I asked Pico.

"Not within leagues of it, Francisco. I suppose it is all grown up now. I remember when we left the thirty-nine men there who were to drop out of this world as completely as a stone sinks in a pond, leaving no corpses, no graves, no records, not so much as a Spanish word scribbled on a rock or the blazed surface of a tree—not a nugget of gold in the well where Columbus had told them to throw it in case of attack."

"Did Columbus just pick out thirty-nine and say they had to stay whether they wanted to or not?"

"No, they all volunteered, but they were a wistful group on the beach when we set sail back to Spain in the *Nina*. I fired the ship's cannon; we shouted good-by; their downhearted answer was hardly loud enough to be heard above the surf. As long as we could see, they still stood there, with twice thirty-nine hands uplifted in farewell. Among those left at La Nividad whom we were never to see again were a doctor, carpenter, cooper, tailor, and gunner. And several of them had been taken out of Spanish prisons. When I compared their evil countenances with the refined and sensitive face of the doctor—Señor Alonso—I felt almost as sorry for him as if we were marooning him on some uninhabited and unknown shore."

We reached Santo Domingo on June 29. This capital and principal city of the New World had a smooth, deep bay in front of it, a deep curving river on two sides, and a thick, high wall, with towers and a moat, on the fourth side. It contained about fifty squares of buildings, a half dozen north-and-south avenues, and eight or nine east-and-west streets. The separately walled fortress occupied a big rectangle in the center of the city.

Riding at anchor in the harbor, was the superb fleet of thirty-five vessels that had brought Ovando here, and was now about ready to return to Spain with Bobadilla.

As a messenger, Columbus selected Captain Pedro de Terreros of the *Gallego*. Pico and I rowed him ashore, and accompanied him to the fortress where Governor Ovando presided in state, silked and brocaded beyond anything the New World had seen before and waited on hand and foot by his twenty-two esquires. We met with more formality here than we had at the Alhambra Palace; more of it from this little, florid-faced man than from the king.

Ovando held in his hand a letter from Fonseca. "Why is Columbus here?" he demanded.

He lifted me as he would a sack of grain and tossed me over the railing into the sea.

"He has disobeyed the sovereigns. I will have no dealings with him."

"Your Excellency, he has a disabled ship," explained Captain Terreros. "He wishes to exchange it for another or to get it repaired."

"The feigned distress of a ship, a shallow subterfuge, a transparent excuse. Give my respects to Columbus and ask him to leave Santo Domingo harbor at once. Good day, *capitán.*" The captain still stood before him. Ovando lifted his eyes from some papers he had picked up, stared at Columbus' messenger with lofty superciliousness. He nodded to two of his esquires. "The *señor capitán's* manners are deficient. Escort him to the door."

Even this did not serve as a dismissal of the ship captain. The two esquires did not come all the way to him. They stopped before the look of one who had commanded men most of his life.

"Your Excellency, I am not through," he said to the governor. "Since you refer to my manners, let me breach them further to say I represent a greater man than you are, sir. The Admiral of the Ocean Sea observes the fleet getting ready to depart. He begs you to hold it, because a storm is approaching, and he asks the privilege of sheltering his own ships in the harbor until the tempest has passed."

"Has your admiral quitted navigation to compete with village soothsayers of the weather? Has he come all the way from Cadiz to predict a hurricane on a clear day?"

"In the coming storm, Your Excellency, the ships will be in great danger if they leave the protected roadstead."

"Will you return to Columbus and ask him to desist from pretexts, artifices, evasions? Remind him that the king and queen have forbidden his coming here. He must leave at once."

We told all this to Columbus, holding back and softening nothing, only to have him send us again to the governor. His concern for the fleet made him expose us, and himself through us, to further insolence and insults.

This time, as the sailor and I followed Captain Terreros along a street near the harbor, a man leaped out from a bench where he was sitting in the sun.

"Pico!" he cried in eager greeting.

Pico said never a word but frowned darkly and walked on. The man's gladness wilted upon the moment and he returned crestfallen to his bench. Then Pico stopped, walked back, stood in front of him until he looked up, and spat in his face.

"Why, Pico," I exclaimed in amazement. "The man was glad to see you!"

"Do you know who that is?"

"No, and I can't understand it—his happiness at recognizing you, your treatment of him."

"That is Togno. He used to be Columbus' cook."

"Togno? I don't recall hearing him mentioned before. What did he do to you, Pico?"

"Nothing to me, Francisco, but he is the one who fastened the chains on Columbus. Many men were gathered around to look curiously on all the procedure of this disgrace. Bobadilla asked for a volunteer to put the fetters on. Nobody stepped forward, nobody moved. Then this cook, this Togno, impudently took the chains and kneeled and looked up into the admiral's face and clasped the fetters shut as jauntily as if he had been serving him a favorite sauce."

CAPTAIN TERREROS again stood before Governor Ovando, no more abashed than if this were his first call. That richly garmented official remarked: "You exhaust my courtesy, *señor capitán*, and my patience. What now?"

"The fleet, Your Excellency. The admiral forecasts a storm. He entreats you to act now to prevent great wreckage, great losses. He entreats you not to permit the ships to put into the open ocean."

Governor Ovando asked an esquire to pull back the draperies from a fortress window. Then he pointed at the clear sky, the serene weather, the fair June day without any threat or portent that an inexperienced eye could see.

"Has Columbus sent you here a second time to tell me nothing more than that in all the fair weather we behold out yonder is locked a dangerous storm?"

"He has, Your Excellency, and urges you all the more to believe him because the indications and signs are not plain for everybody to read."

"Wait!" he said to us. He clapped his hands four times. Four of his esquires rushed forward, and to them he gave orders. "Go along the waterfront. Find all pilots who are ashore. Bring them here at once."

In a few minutes there came seven mariners, ranging in age from youths to graybeards, the former no less grave than the latter with the peculiar gravity of those who follow the sea. To them Ovando repeated the storm warnings. They scorned Columbus' predictions, scoffed at him as a weather prophet. Whereupon we left.

We remained in the harbor during the night but without shore leave to anybody. Columbus gave notice to the four captains to sail at daylight in order to find a protected anchorage for riding out the storm. "It will be here," he declared, "notwithstanding the skeptical pilots."

We swung at anchor in that quiet harbor, and only a man and a helmsman kept each of the night watches. At two bells, or one o'clock, I heard a slight noise amidship on the port side. The weather was still windless and cloudless. The night had no moon but plenty of stars that seemed brighter and closer than those in Spain. A rope dangled along the side of the vessel. A boat was being rowed away toward the town. Two men were in it.

I judged it to be somebody stealing leave, along with a person from another ship. Nevertheless, since my starboard watch would last three hours more until eight bells, I was resolved to witness the return of whoever it was. Meanwhile I pulled up a dangling cable. I saw lights go on at a fortress window, and stay on for a full hour. At six bells or three o'clock the boat returned. I looked over the railing. It came close alongside. A stocky man stood up and reached and groped with his hands over the planking.

"Zorilla, do you want a rope?" I called down.

I threw the end to him. He clasped it and swung himself up by it.

The moment I called out, the second man

pulled down his cap and lowered his chin in his jacket collar. As soon as he was free of Zorilla, he gave a hard push against the ship's side, then dipped both oars in long strokes, and was soon fathoms away. By the starlight I could not be sure, but everything about the man was suggestive of Francisco de Porras, captain of the *Santiago*. I watched to see if the boat pulled off to that ship. It went around the stern of the *Vizcaino* and was lost to sight. Yet this half-recognition persisted. I rejected the possibility that a trusted commander of one of Columbus' caravels should be on such terms with Zorilla.

Still the indistinct, shadowy observation made me think of Captain Porras and no one else.

Zorilla was for walking past me without explanation and with only sarcastic acknowledgment of my aid. "Thank you for giving me the rope—the same one you pulled up."

I grabbed him by the arm. He did not shake off my hand, but stood there passively enough, though vouchsafing no further speech.

"Where have you been?" I demanded.

"In Santo Domingo."

"You heard Captain Tristan say there would be no leave for anybody."

"I heard—but who are you to question me, who are you to say where I should go and shouldn't? I don't like a meddlesome stripling. Pup from Cadiz, learn not to put your nose into things that don't concern you, and you will get along better. Yet I will answer you. I was thirsty. The Santo Domingo rum is good."

"You are a common sailor, but you go ashore and drink at the taverns with a ship's captain."

"You saw me with a man from the *Vizcaino*, a common sailor like myself. And I do not give his name; I do not inform on my friends. Go tell Captain Tristan. Go tell the admiral. Tell them now or tell them tomorrow that I took French leave for a little innocent amusement. We have a commander of Spanish ships who is so unwelcome in a Spanish harbor that we must all stay cooped up in our vessels. An English ship, or a French, or a Venetian would be admitted. But we are repulsed. No port will receive Columbus, the Italian upstart, because he is everywhere hated and resented."

He spoke so of Columbus, whose life darkly illustrated man's ingratitude. I could not help what I did; the impulse was one I could not control. My flat right hand went with all my strength against Zorilla's square jaw.

He was surprised, astonished, enraged. His big hands grasped my waist with crushing pressure. He lifted me up as he would a sack of grain and tossed me over the railing into the sea.

At the splash and at my smothered cries, the helmsman called out: "Man overboard! Man overboard!"

The cable was still hanging down over the side of the ship. I swam to this and clambered up, not hand over hand as Zorilla had done, but stretched out horizontally with my wet shoes stamping and slipping upon the planked surface of the hull.

Pico and others of my shipmates were at the rail to receive me. Captain Tristan soon joined us, and I told him all that had happened. Columbus, apparently sleeping through the noise, did not emerge from his cabin. The captain placed Zorilla in chains to prevent his escape.

The ships sailed away at dawn as ordered. At that time Columbus was awake and about. His decision was to free Zorilla and to say nothing to Captain Porras, though keeping that commander under suspicion.

"They ought to walk the plank, the rascals!" said Pico. The parrot listened but did not speak, because at the moment his hooked bill was busy with food.

For his squadron Columbus found a somewhat sheltered moorage. Within two days the storm signs became clear enough—dark skies, wild ocean, rising wind. One of the terrible hurricanes of those latitudes beat its fury upon us.

We rode through it, but the seven skeptical pilots, and the five times seven, had started back to Spain. The fleet was wrecked, and the shores of Hispaniola were strewed with its fragments. The king's treasure ship went to the bottom, including a huge bar of gold worth nine thousand pesos. And Bobadilla, the shackler of Columbus, was swallowed up by the waves. The only ship able to sail on to Spain was the little caravel that carried four thousand pieces of gold belonging to Columbus.

All these ships gone, and all his saved—what was the reason? There were three explanations. Columbus believed Providence had preserved him. His enemies claimed he had used witchcraft. More practical men shrugged their shoulders and said he was simply a good seaman.

Howbeit, this particular storm was behind us like a vindication and a triumph.

What was ahead—for the hundred and forty men, for Columbus, for me? It was well that they and he did not know, and especially that I did not.

CHAPTER XII

THE PARROT AND THE PLANK

COLUMBUS took us on to find the strait through which to go to Cipango and Cathay and Calicut. We encountered contrary winds that were strong and fierce, and currents like a river's and racing the wrong way. Incessantly, day after day, night following black night, came the drenching rains,

lightning streaks as big as a man's arm, thunder that rolled across the heavens and rent them. The ship's seams opened; leakage joined with the downpours to spoil the food. The shrouds and all the stout cables of the rigging were strained and loosened and the strands often parted to toss and pop and to fret and fray and wear out like the cracker of a whip. Remnant sails tormented the yards and almost burst from them, disordered, ripped, and bellying beyond endurance. The spars bent and gave way, sometimes snapped in two with the evenness of a stone struck by a hammer, sometimes to sunder in sharp-pointed, splintered ends a half-fathom long.

One afternoon of the gale, a man cried out: "Look a-larboard! Look a-weather!"

We looked and beheld a spectacle tenfold more terrifying than the billows. The water was whirled up and up in a column that tapered to a point and stood there on the face of the deep, spinning like a top. Lo, as we gazed in wonder, a similar column descended from a low cloud, and met it! Shaped like a monstrous hour-glass, these formed a double cone connecting cloud and sea. The water all the while was sucked up with a great continuous rush, rumbling like a cataract. It came, with dizzy horizontal whirl, straight toward us, and the trembling mariners repeated passages from St. John.

As for Pico, he ran to a cannon, with me at his heels, and aimed and fired at the stem of the funnels. He rushed to another cannon and fired it. The first shot missed, but the second struck and severed the column, which parted with a report louder than that of the guns. The lower part fell back upon itself in a tremendous spray and agitation. The upper part, deprived of its prop, fell as a solid mass of water, its outer rim drenching us.

Once, but only once, Pico brought the parrot on deck. The wind picked up a corner of the black covering and tore it off and carried it away; and while the ruffled bird was uttering his profanities, his feathers were flying thickly out of the cage, across the deck, and out over the boisterous sea. "*El Diablo*," he said appropriately when taken below. Pico made another cage covering out of ordinary sailcloth.

The poor horses now pulled at their halters, now lay upon their straw in terrible seasickness, and now tried to keep their footing as they slid back and forth against the bulkheads of their stalls.

During the worst fury of the tempest, we prepared for death. The roughest of us knelt in prayer, with petitioning faces upturned to the drenching rain.

Yet the storms finally ceased. These had beset us upwards of sixty days, all along the northern coast of what we called Honduras. Better weather indeed came—but with it came mutiny.

What a forlorn heritage was Columbus' for all he had done for Spain, for the world!

During the hurricane, Zorilla and three of his confederates ever murmured and complained more impatiently and boldly.

His was the port watch. Pico's and mine the starboard. All of us in our watch frequently remarked to one another, "They ought to walk the plank, the rascals," until the parrot took up the saying as the newest addition to his conversation. Once, in his rage at this, Zorilla lunged at the bird and put his hairy hands to the fragile cage. Everyone expected him to crush it and the parrot with it. But he controlled himself and stopped.

We knew that Zorilla and these brazen three were disloyal but not how many besides. There was such a seditious atmosphere about the ship that we feared the rebels might outnumber the honest hands.

At the first open outbreak of discontent, Columbus was too ill in his cabin to attend to it. Captain Tristan, with the excuse of not troubling the sick admiral, prepared to deal with the rogues in the way they deserved, without delay and without half-measures.

At the section of the Honduran coast where we now were, the natives came out in canoes and hung around the ships. Sometimes they were willing to trade food for hawk's bells and other trinkets. Numbers of their canoes surrounded us at a distance at anchorages, and occasionally followed us as we coasted along.

Zorilla went to Captain Tristan and spoke right out to him in treasonable language. "On this route we are going, we are sure to run into still worse tempests, and perish. Columbus cannot return to Spain. He cannot return to Hispaniola. He is banished from both places. What, then, are desperate risks to him? This mad exile is frantically driven to put himself back in favor, to have the sovereigns smile on him again. So, in order to find the strait and a short route to Cathay, he will take us right into the open jaws of destruction. We must turn back. I order you to turn back."

"You order me, Zorilla?"

"I do, sir."

"And if I refuse, and the admiral refuses, what then?"

"I will take possession of the ship. My men are ready. My men on the other ships are ready."

"I happen to think the same way you do, Zorilla. But we have the admiral to deal with. He is sick and ought to put about for his own sake as well as ours, but he may be very determined, very stubborn. Can I count on your assistance in handling him?"

"Yes, sir, my assistance and my men's."

"If we could protect him from any criticism by the king and queen for appearing halfhearted in this enterprise, I think he would be glad to turn back, equally with ourselves. For

instance, if we could sign a paper setting forth the need, aye, the necessity of it. In case you agree, I will have a document drawn up for the signatures of your men, and of others who are likely then to see eye to eye with us."

"Captain, the arrangement pleases me. And I am pleased by your attitude, sir. When a distinguished lord of Spain learns of it, he will commend you."

"You mean Fonseca?"

"Aye, sir."

weight will the document have. I am a little uneasy about doing this here in my cabin. The admiral, as you know, is ill, but he might arouse himself and perceive what we are about —and upset matters. Let us say in a quarter of an hour from now in the store-cabin in the hold. Send your men down one at a time. Kindly assemble them on deck with as little appearance as possible of anything being afoot. You and I can add our signatures at the very last."

The fleet was wrecked and the shore of Hispaniola strewed with its fragments.

The captain went into his cabin with his clerk and with Zorilla. He asked the latter's advice from time to time during the composition of the paper. When completed, this was read aloud and jointly declared satisfactory.

"In a quarter of an hour then, Zorilla, hold your men in readiness to sign, all of them, since the more signatures we obtain the greater

THE first man came precisely as arranged. Whereupon the captain was much pleased, for he had been afraid Zorilla might smell a rat. Apparently the latter was too accustomed to the subtleties of the Inquisition to tell good logic from bad. The first one sent down was seized in the act of signing and put

in irons. He was taken away and gagged so that he might not cry out through the bulkheads to warn the others. Zorilla himself came last, unsuspecting to the end. Eight men were involved, including him. This was two more than Zorilla's original group but fewer than we expected. The ship had only seven sets of irons. So Zorilla had to be temporarily trussed up with ropes, all the while crying out against the captain's perfidy.

"Why not use the admiral's chains?" I suggested. "Shall I run and get them, sir?"

"It is not wise to disturb him," said the captain. "He may repudiate all we have done."

Anxieties and ceaseless labors had made Columbus so ill and fevered that for several days he had kept to his bed. A small cabin had been constructed for him at the stern. From this, even while helpless to rise from his cot, he could yet look out and superintend the sailing of the ships. As long as he was able to see and speak he remained a good navigator.

"The chains are in his regular cabin, sir. No need for him to know. He will be angry when he misses them, but he broods on them. It is healthier for him that they be taken away, in addition to their serving us now."

"Fetch them, then, Francisco."

I passed Columbus' makeshift cabin on the way to his regular and now empty quarters. I looked in. He was asleep but saying such things in his delirium that I was glued to the spot to listen.

"Oh, fool, and slow to believe and serve thy God! He made thy name to resound marvelously throughout the earth. Of the gates of the ocean, shut up by such mighty chains, He delivered thee the keys. The promises which God has made thee He has never broken, nor said, after receiving thy services, that His meaning was different."

I knew this latter referred to the human ingratitude he had received, the grossest known in the world, and particularly to Fonseca's and the king's scheming nullities. I went on to do my own underhanded errand, feeling guilty in the doing of it, though knowing it for the best.

When I returned to the hold, with the clanking sack over my shoulder, the ropes were taken off Zorilla and the chain fastened on.

"Shall we remove him now, sir, and put him with the others?" a man asked.

"No, take him up on deck. The others likewise. Arrange a plank on the port side, up forward, as far away from Columbus as possible. This execution must take place at once while the admiral is confined to his cabin, or it might not take place at all.'"

Zorilla had heard all this and cast himself down abjectly and at the captain's feet to beg for his worthless life.

We signaled the other ships and deadened sail. It was such a fair day as a little while back we had never expected to see again. Perhaps a dozen native canoes stood off at a distance. All of us were on deck to watch. I was at the railing next the plank on the left-hand side. Pico was just across the plank from me on the right-hand side, holding the uncovered parrot cage balanced loosely on the railing rim.

The eight mutineers were lined up. Zorilla came last, shuffling along in Columbus' chains across the deck, a step closer to his end as each similarly fettered man fell with a splash, cried, and cried again chokingly, and sank.

The natives, seeing that the first man did not rise within a diver's breath-holding period and that nobody offered succor, drew a little closer and pointed to where the victim had sunk and shouted excitedly: *"Aiya! Aiya!"*

When they saw the same thing happen to the second person, they apparently thought these men were diving under the ship and reappearing on the other side. They sent some boats around to watch there for heads to bob up and shake and blow the sea out of their noses—to watch disappointedly for heads that never appeared.

One of the condemned Spaniards was such a good swimmer that he kept afloat until his successor plunged and sank, and was still afloat until the waves closed simultaneously over him and the second man after him. All the rest went down almost like plummets. The *Santiago* was stationed so that its crew were spectators. We could make out Captain Porras among those watching, and I wondered if this grim sight was extinguishing the mutiny in his own heart.

At last Zorilla stepped upon the plank. He had now recovered all his dignity and composure. His customary brazenness had succeeded all the other moods and emotions he had gone through. His body did not sag or droop; he carried it indeed a little jauntily. He held his chin high and gazed far off over the sea in scorn of our combined and focused gaze.

The parrot had been hitherto silent. Now, as Zorilla came even with him, he uttered his newest words: "They ought to walk the plank, the rascals!"

Zorilla withdrew his look from upon the far distance and directed it quickly down. He reached out his right foot sideways as far beyond the plank as the length of the chain would allow and kicked the loosely held cage out of Pico's hands.

This went sailing into the sea, landing with its bottom on the surface. It was buoyed up there briefly like a toy boat, but not long enough to be rescued or for a rescue to be attempted, only during the space it took the parrot to say seven words, the last abortively stifled in his throat.

"Lord, my lord, my great lord Montezu . . ."

The green waves went over him, and a kind of special soberness took possession of the

watchers. I, for my part, could not shake myself free of the mournful, solemn utterance at that time and place—this dying supplication to the unknown man or god.

ZORILLA did not halt or hesitate now but walked boldly on toward the end of the plank and nothingness. But an event arrested him. He turned around, as a swimmer might turn to address a companion before diving from a divingboard into the Guadalquivir.

The interruption was Columbus. He approached us from his cabin, stumbling and falling as he came, until two men ran forward to support him the rest of the way. I could see he was still affected by his delirium.

"Why does the crew idle? What takes place here? That man . . . in chains . . . my chains . . remove them. . ."

We could tell that hope had come to Zorilla still standing at the end of the plank like a waiting diver and hearing these words.

"We must use the chains, Great Admiral," said the captain. "It is necessary. Later I will explain. I must proceed now, at once. . . Lead him back, men!"

The two men escorted the feebly resisting admiral back to his cabin. As soon as the door closed behind him, the captain called in low command. "Now, Zorilla!" The mutineer walked off the end of the plank as indifferently as if he were descending from one step to another on a stairway.

He made a heavy splash, heavier than any of the others. His cry was not smothered, because he uttered no cry. He began immediately to be active within the strictures of the chains, and he was so powerful and so skillful in using his two hands together and his two legs in coordinated strokes that our astonished eyes beheld a fettered man actually swimming. As he still remained above the waves and noticeably propelled himself across them, the natives drew yet closer and cried repeatedly, *"Yoya! Yoya!"* in evident admiration.

As he struggled, we were aware of another object in the water, some distance away, thrown from a place near the stern. It was the chip of the log-line, the buoy, the big piece of cork.

This could not have got overboard by accident; there was still some disloyal hand we had not yet caught in the dragnet of the captain's deceit. Nobody had been missed during our concentrated attention upon the plunging culprits; nobody had been observed to rejoin the group from the direction of the stern ——nobody, that is, except the two who had assisted the admiral back to his cabin.

We looked at these two meaningly but they showed no embarrassment or self-consciousness or confusion. Turning from them, each looked searchingly in his fellow's face to recognize a ninth man as guilty as these eight and as deserving to walk the plank as they. It could not have been just one of those taking Columbus to his cabin. Complicity would have to include both, else one would now be informing on the other.

"Who threw that?" demanded the captain, but no one answered. No face among us betrayed less innocence than another.

Zorilla had seen the cork at once and had made for it. By the time we had finished with our suspicions and the captain's question, he had covered three-fourths of the distance to it. Pico, like all the rest, had stood inactive. Then, belatedly, he ran toward the stern to pull up the cork by the line. Had this action occurred to him soon enough, he would have succeeded. Now he was too late. By the time he reached the line, Zorilla had clasped the cork. Pico pulled but only pulled to break the cord.

The captain gave an order. Men jumped to their duties, sails were spread, and the ship resumed its slow course along the Honduran Coast.

The last we saw, before the other ships intervened and shut off our backward view, were the native boats coming closer and closer around the man whose manacled hands clung to the big piece of cork. Whether the closing in was to kill or to succor, we knew not. It was not in the code of such matters to rescue him ourselves or to put an end to him. It was not in the code to interfere with what others might do.

Zorilla had walked the plank. We had no further concern with this torturer of the Inquisition, this mutineer, this spy of Fonseca's.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BATTLE OF THE BEACH

THE coast had made an almost right-angled turn, from nearly south to nearly east. The cape at the turn was called by us Gracias a Dios—thanks to God—because of our deliverance from the hurricanes. The present shore we paralleled was known as the Mosquito Coast from the natives dubbing themselves *Misskitos.*

"Appropriate," said Pico waggishly, "very appropriate—for two reasons, *señores.* The fringing islands are as thick as mosquitoes and the mosquitoes themselves are thick.

Late in the afternoon, we stood off the mouths of two rivers emptying themselves into the sea about half a league apart. The first seemed to be without inhabitants. At the second was a large crowd of naives, on the beach watching us, or kneedeep and waist-deep in the water, or on the ridge just back of the

beach. With drums and conches and their own loud throats, they made a din that reached us above the noise of the surf. The tumult was plainly not hostile but in excited, eager welcome.

"They seem glad to see us," I remarked.

"Always," answered Pico, "and always gladder to see us go. What do white men mostly bring to red ones?"

"Civilization."

"Misery," declared Pico.

We needed to land and rest and refresh ourselves. We needed to investigate the other ship crews to learn how far had spread the spirit of mutiny.

Two boats were put off with lead-lines to sound the entrance to see if the caravels might not sail right into the river, for easier unloading and for disembarking the horses. Pico was in one boat. I was in another, as assistant to Luis Nino, who went ashore as an ambassador.

This Nino, one-time barber of Barcelona, had become tired, terribly tired of cutting locks and trimming beards, and had sought fortune and adventure at sea. He had an engaging manner with other Spaniards, and Captain Tristan counted on his also having an amiable way with the natives. He was supplied with a few combs, a few scissors, and a few looking-glasses.

The natives were all gathered north of the river. Basking in the sun on the southern bank were scaly, long-snouted creatures of great hugeness that made the sailors cry out: "Crocodiles!" They were a timider breed than the Nile man-eaters, sliding off into the water with simultaneous splashes as we approached.

The river itself was a good five fathoms deep, though so narrow that the rigging and yards might brush the overhanging foliage of the trees. The difficulty was a bar with barely sufficient water to let the ships pass over.

Nino, with my help, at length induced one boy to come close enough to see himself in the held-out mirror. Fascinated by his own image, he came closer. Nino put a comb in his tangled hair. He fled but returned. The combing was resumed, with a little smoothing and ever a little more of it as he gazed, until he finally looked at himself with his long, black locks parted in the middle, and was vastly pleased. Nino continued to speak fair and smooth, and was equally assiduous and ingratiating with the scissors, at first making bangs over the boy's forehead and finally cropping him close.

The lad went running back to the crowd. Then there was a stampede for Nino's services. He worked until dark; they wouldn't accept any scissoring from me. About his feet on the sandy beach was enough hair to stuff a mattress. They would have brought torches for him to continue, but he declared it a day, saying to me with a yawn of exhaustion: "At Barcelona I would have earned fifty *marevidis*. Now I have earned nothing but *muy fatigo*."

His barbering in fact had secured for us the warm friendship of all these people.

The next day we started to sail in, the *Capitana* in the lead. Nearing the bar, Captain Tristan suddenly stopped, turned the ship about, and retreated. A boat was sent ahead to sound again. It was now low tide, and the bar was too thinly covered to afford a passage. At high tide we entered, not risking all the ships but only the *Capitana*.

The horses were put ashore, having strapped upon their backs the two small cannon, Portable No. 1 and Portable No. 2. We brought one sack of marble balls, and one sack of small shot, consisting of a mixture of pebbles and odds and ends of iron from the blacksmith shop. Two sailors carried out of the hold and off to shore seven kegs of powder, one keg ready mixed. Pico and I also had two matchlocks each.

All this artillery and ammunition among a friendly people might make it appear that friendship on our side was a tongue-in-cheek affair. It was simply a precaution.

As we scanned our surroundings for a good cannon spot our eyes fell upon the slope of the farther, uninhabited bank at the foot of which the crocodiles sunned themselves. Pico and I agreed at once that this would be the best location. Placed halfway up the high slope on that southern side, the guns, in case of need, would have a much more effective coverage of the tribesmen than if actually set up among them.

Everything was taken across the river in boats, carried forty cubits up, and deposited on a kind of terrace. Pico and I excused the sailors, and we ourselves got our artillery emplacements in order.

THERE was competition as to who would ride the unburdened horses, the mate and boatswain winning by virtue of shoving the common sailors aside and climbing on. They went off at full speed toward the other stream.

We observed that the beach between the two river-mouths made a good place in which to turn the horses loose. The abrupt ridge back a short distance from the beach, the sea in front, and the river at each end, all formed a natural corral.

"Sailors on horseback," observed Pico. "Watch them take a tumble."

"No, Pico, look how fast they ride and how they hang on."

The two seamen dashed back and forth several times. The natives lined up along the ridge to watch them, as people would gather to see a horserace in Spain; they looked upon the animals as supernatural creatures. They still watched after the sorrel and gray were turned

loose to spurt away and turn suddenly and snort, as they might have responded in an Andalusian pasture to the animation of spring.

Some natives wore gold as nose ornaments, some as throat pendants, some mixed it with feathers and animal-paws for coronets. Nino traded a comb worth a *marevidi* for a gold disk worth fifty pesos. The Indian, in ecstacy over his bargain, heeled it away as fast as he could in fear of Nino's changing his mind. The Spaniards asked where the gold came from. The natives made signs that it came from far up the river.

But even when the sailors prospected here at the mouth of the river, they found gold particles at the roots of trees. With gourds and calabashes, and pans from the *Capitana's* galley, they washed it out.

Pico called my attention to Captain Tristan. "Didn't you always think of him, Francisco, as a stern, sober-headed sea-captain? But look at him now."

"Pico, Francisco," the captain called across the river to us, "do you see this tree here? The bank has caved away from some of the roots but not enough. Will you shoot into it with the cannon?"

"If we do that, *Señor Capitán,*" Pico called back, "the tree might topple over into the water, roots and all, and take the paydirt with it, and you couldn't get it from the bottom of the river. Better just dig it out."

"That's right," agreed the captain, "that's right."

"I just didn't want to fire one of the cannon," Pico explained, "and scare the natives; and, besides, if we once started it, we would have to shoot down every tree along the river bank."

Captain Tristan took the *Capitana's* longboat, with eight men, and started upstream, saying not to expect them back for two or three days, not until they found the rich gravel, the yellow sands.

This gold fever did not please the chief. It did not please his six councillors who went everywhere he went and decided everything he decided so that he was only the sorriest kind of figurehead and echo. What had a still worse effect was the evil behavior of the Spaniards, the low-type ones, the scum, the offscourings of jails. These consumed the native food; made themselves at home in the native houses that stood in rows about a half-league back from the beach; forced the natives to wait on them like servants. Brawls and fistfights resulted; friendship turned to resentment; the people wanted with all their hearts to be rid of these vile and bearded guests.

The officers saw serious trouble ahead. The *Capitana* passed across the bar and anchored outside, with the crew thereafter kept to quarters by the mate, Captain Tristan not yet having returned. But dozens had come ashore in boats from the other ships, and these still roamed about at will in continued evil-doing.

Deep in the night the hatch cover suddenly opened and the natives leaped out.

The chief, scowling and painted black, with his six councillors, scowling and painted red, came out in a canoe to get redress from the great bearded one—Columbus. On the way to the *Capitana* they passed by the *Santiago.* Captain Porras called down to them over the rail and wanted to know what they desired. The chief made signs that the Spaniards had to leave. They had to leave at once.

The captain turned to his mate. "Have a ladder let down. I am going to invite the old black-face and his six red devils aboard."

Porras smiled in his whiskers. He was very

amiable. He was sorry for the way the men had acted. Of course they would leave. But they would have to wait until the absent captain returned with his eight men from up river. Meanwhile he would take great pleasure in showing the humble ship to his highness and his highness' six grandees.

After some deck and cabin inspection, he took them down through a hatchway into the forward hold. It was somewhat dark down there, especially a little distance from under the open hatch, back in the recesses. Would they wait a moment? They must feel no uneasiness. He would return immediately.

He climbed the ladder. The ladder was pulled up after him. The hatch door was closed, leaving those below in pitch blackness. The chief and his six councillors were prisoners aboard the *Santiago,* and Columbus on the *Capitana* knew nothing of it.

That night four guards slept on the hatch cover, as an extra precaution, for this was too high for the prisoners to reach. But deep in the night it suddenly opened. The four guards rolled off and waked up. But by that time the seven natives had leaped out of their prison, hitting with their fists as they emerged, and ran across the deck, and dived into the sea. The coming-to-life guards saw what had happened. The seven men had piled up boxes, kegs and ballast rock as a platform from which with bent backs they could lift the weighted hatch-door.

Not long afterwards, war drums began to beat, conches sounded, war whoops came across to the ships. The next morning, five hundred painted warriors stood along the ridge back of the beach, armed with bows, darts, clubs, lances, hatchets, javelins, and flint-edged swords of wood.

Our miscreants were now frantic enough. They attempted to reach the various small boats pulled up on the beach. Five of them were killed or wounded.

"We must fire," said Pico. "Their lives are not worth it, but they are Spaniards. Let us give a volley from each gun, empty ones without ball or grape. You first, Francisco."

At the sound. the whole line of natives backed up two or three cubits, as they might do before an encroaching wave or at a policeman's command along a city street on festival day. They then stopped, evidently regarding it as harmless thunder. Pico's empty volley had even less effect.

WE loaded again from the ready-mixed keg and fired two more empty shots. The effect was no greater than before. Whenever a Spaniard tried to slip down to a boat, he was headed off. One was felled by an arrow, one by a javelin, and several cried out from wounds as they fled.

The horses, at the cannon sounds, had raced back and forth a time or two, tossing their manes and tails in exuberance and excitement. The natives on guard at the boats gave the animals clearance. The main army on the ridge above, sent no weapon down upon them.

"A marble ball this time," said Pico.

One Indian was killed, one had his leg broken. They fled back in disorder for a hundred cubits or so to the rear of the ridge crest. This afforded five Spaniards a chance to launch a boat; before they were clear of the rollers, two were wounded by arrows from the reapproaching warriors.

An empty boat came down the river and drifted over the bar, where it tossed aimlessly. In a little while a dead body floated past, badly mangled, one of those who had gone up the river for gold. Three other corpses of our shipmates came at intervals, then, after a longer wait, four more.

"All except the captain," said Pico. "He may be captured but worse off than these others."

"No," I called. "There is Captain Tristan coming now."

He passed rapidly by as we looked down, with his face upturned and his beard stroked by the current.

Our next shots were with the pebbles and scrap iron. We kept up the firing until all the boats were in the surf and all the Spaniards fleeing in them, except the dead and seriously wounded.

We began to reload, not knowing when the whole force of barbarians would assault us. By this time we had exhausted the ready-mixed gunpowder. I turned up a new keg. It said *su;* another was branded c. We turned them up one after another to find that all six were sulphur or charcoal—not a keg of saltpetre in the whole lot when there ought to have been four. The two sailors had carelessly picked up the six kegs most conveniently at hand or had been unable to see in the dark of the hold.

We could not reload. We were without gunpowder. All the shots we had were four—those in our matchlocks—scant artillery for holding off an army of savages.

"I will go for saltpetre," said Pico.

He loudly hailed a late boat-load. They halted and began to row back. He dived into the river to meet them.

The crocodiles had not been around in the tumult; I wondered about them now, with Pico in the stream; yet the floating dead bodies had not been attacked. The horses were also out of sight, no doubt in the lee of the ridge at the other stream.

I had the four loaded matchlocks left in case the natives came at me, upon observing me now to be alone. But they did not gather in my direction, nor along the river opposite me; none of them attempted to swim across to capture me.

They had come down from the ridge to the beach. Thence they had walked out kneedeep and waistdeep in the surf. They were shouting war cries, beating drums, blowing conches, keeping up a defiant cry, and brandishing their weapons, as boats were launched from the ships in a counter attack. The ships themselves did not dare to come into the river, for now rately from the craft tossing in the surf. The natives, now with reinforcements, stood in the water in a double unwavering line, daring the boats to come on. Cannon from the decks were fired but these struck short, in one instance barely missing one of our own boats. That battle line, grown to a thousand men, gave no sign of retiring, breaking, or fleeing in the face

We began to reload, not knowing when the whole force of barbarians would assault us.

the tide was low again and the *Capitana* or any other caravel would ground upon the bar and break to pieces under the gaze of the joyful savages.

In one of the boats being freshly launched was Pico with kegs piled high in it among the men.

The Spanish small boats came closer, firing matchlocks as they came, but firing inaccu- of the boats. Some indeed waded farther out, so that when the waves lifted them up, they might be within practical range to throw darts at the bearded boatmen.

Two sailors who during the previous escape had been too wounded to make their way to the boats under attack or who had arrived too late from some inland hiding-place—these two had mounted the sorrel and gray at the other

stream. They now came racing up the beach.

I could see it all plainly from where I stood at the futile cannon. I felt sick at their foolhardiness, expecting those savages to put spears through their hearts. But the natives made an opening so the horses could pass through; they did not try by their bulwark to deter them; not a weapon was thrown.

The sailors rode them into the surf as their hoofs tossed up spray. They crowded the horses on when they tried to turn back as the waves dashed in their faces. Finally the animals refused to go any further, but reared up there on their hind legs amidst the billows. The men jumped off and swam the rest of the way to the boats.

The riderless horses turned back, splashed through the surf, and approached the line of men athwart them. Again this line made a gap, two gaps, for the sorrel and gray to pass through. The horses sped away down the beach toward the other river mouth.

Pico urged the oarsmen in his boat forward. The natives, wading deeper out to meet them, stood athwart them in a double line and brandished their spears. Perhaps a score swam the river to line up in the water forward of that beach. The two lines went toward each other, in water up to their armpits. They could not keep their footing on the tumultuous bar itself, but they stood there on either side of that gateway to the river, ready to cast their spears, ready to dart into the water and take hold of the boat.

Pico still called on the men to row through that opening. Even as he exhorted them, one sailor tumbled out of the boat, with a keg in his arms to buoy him up until he reached a boat in the rear. Another sailor took to the water with another keg.

The rowers reversed their oar strokes and began to back up. A half dozen natives dived into the boisterous water to grab the gunwale on either side. Pico and the oarsmen only had time to plunge into the water, holding kegs like the rest, to be picked up by the other boats. Three of the natives pulled the boat out of deep water, towing it, not attempting to row it, and dragging it out upon the beach.

All the Spanish boats stood in line some distance off, in uncertainty what to do. They were shouting at one another, as I could see, but what they said was drowned out by the still defiant tumult of the natives.

THE twenty or so who had crossed over, now looked up to where I was, then started toward me, and I knew my time had come. As they came, I held up both hands with the flat palms out in imperious sign for them to stop. I stood there in that gesture, and as long as I stood so they remained halted. I dropped my hands. They came on. Again I gave the imperious halt sign but this time without result. I began to talk fast and loud; they could not understand a word, of course, but the tones had an intimidating effect; they stopped and said some things to one another as if in question.

They started to come on and the moment they started I fired. The man was hit in the shoulder; he was jarred off his feet. Yelling in pain, he rolled into the river, but managed to drag himself out before he drowned.

I threw the empty arquebus down and picked up another. I knew that Pico, having heard that, would know I had three shots left and that the extremity in which they had to be used had come.

The natives discussed the matter some more and pointed to the matchlock. Again they advanced. This time I missed. Emboldened, they hardly halted at the report, and, as quickly as I could, I grabbed up the third loaded gun and gave them a charge that hit a man in the kneecap and made him jump and yell and later clutch the bank and moan. He slid down the steep slope, feet first on his stomach in spite of his clutching, until his legs were soaking in the water and the cold liquid eased his pain.

Now I was at bay. It could be only a matter of minutes. But that final shot seemed infinitely precious.

As the attackers climbed on toward me, I pitched the marble cannon balls at them. At the second throw, I unexpectedly killed a man, striking him on the forehead and felling him upon the instant. He never uttered a sound but rolled over and over and splashed into the river and floated on in the current as the murdered Spaniards had done. But the sight of his dark face, and the hair that Nino had clipped short so recently in friendship, made me feel weak and squeamish, and indignant even amidst my danger that the evil of other men should force me to this bloodshed.

The feeling was brief enough, for my life would be forfeit to any humanity now. I began also to hurl the kegs. One of these took the leader in the stomach. He stumbled and lost his footing and fell backward. The keg rolled on in advance of him and slapped the current and moved seaward with it. The leader slid down the steep slope but lodged within a few cubits of the river's rim. He came to and tried to lift his head, but found this impossible so abruptly uphill.

Reinforcements put into the river to swim across, a score, two-score. I bombarded those near me with the remaining kegs and balls, beating them almost back down to the water's edge. Then I fired my last shot at the lead swimmer. There was a jet of blood, a streak of it trailing him in the water. Abruptly he turned downstream, but his movements, his kicking, his paddling, had ceased.

I fled into the woods back of me and up

higher, running as fast as if on level ground, faster, it seemed to me, than I had ever done in my life before.

The forest grew thickly, and underbrush filled in like a hedge all the space between the tree trunks. It did not take many steps to lose me to view, but the noise I made in penetrating the thicket marked my route as clearly as if I had been in sight. I ran on and on in a kind of panic.

As I stopped a moment to gasp for breath, I was suddenly aware there was no noise of pursuit. I quieted the tumult of my own senses to attend with calm hearing. Indeed there was no sound of anyone's breaking through the thicket; no motion of the leaves and stems; for some reason I wasn't being followed.

Why? Did they know I would have to emerge in time? I recalled that they had not thrown darts or lances or javelins. All the attacking had been by me. Had it been their object to capture me alive? Or was there merciful gratitude for helping Nino to barber so many of them? Because I handled the machines that made the thunder, did I also enjoy some of the sanctity that extended to the horses?

Nevertheless, I went on for perhaps a half-league farther. I could not look out of the woods rising so high above me and the brush so thick round me to get any view of the sea.

Darkness came. I heard the gun of one ship, no doubt that of the *Capitana*. There was a gun in answer, a third, a fourth. They were signals I knew very well. They were signals to leave that dangerous harbor.

Columbus and his captains were marooning me in the New World, alone in a limitless wilderness, the only white person on some vast island or endless mainland ten times bigger than Spain. They did not realize, of course, that they were marooning me. They must think me dead for Pico knew, all knew I had fired the fourth and last charge in the matchlock.

CHAPTER XIV

A KING IN CHAINS

ALL night I lay there in the thicket, my head throbbing with dismal thoughts, my heart heavy with despair.

When morning came I stole out, went a short distance by stealth, hearkening and listening, then going a short distance farther. Once my heart jumped into my mouth, as if I had a wafer there, and I fell upon my stomach on the ground, for such a rattling approached me through the brush as I had not heard before.

Two large beasts, about four feet high and fully a fathom long, appeared through the interstices, following some rough animal trail, with heads close to the ground as hogs might travel. Indeed they looked partly like hogs and partly like small elephants, having snouts for all the world like short trunks that had started to grow long and stopped. They were brown, with black manes on their necks, and with the crookedest hind legs I had ever seen on quadrupeds, giving them the continuous appearance of being about to squat or of buckling under their own weight. In single file, these New World combinations of hog and elephant passed on along the jungle trail without smelling or noticing me.

I got to my feet and trod softly in the wake of the two animals. They were going in my direction and their noisy passage would first attract attention and give me warning of any human being abroad in the woods. When I had sufficiently emerged, I eagerly viewed the harbor and the shore.

Out to sea there was not a sail visible. That faint hope was gone definitely and gone forever.

But there were also no natives about, not so much as a sentinel. Now rid of the bearded ones, they had apparently gone to their houses half a league inland in blessed peace again.

I was emboldened to venture still farther out and to come finally to where the cannon had been. They were gone, everything was gone. I thought for a moment that Pico, with helpers, might have stolen back in the night to get them. Then I saw a torn track leading down to water. The two cannon had been thrown into the river by the savages. The muzzle of one pointed out drunkenly from the surface. I could see the other flat on its side in the transparent depths. Fishes swam over the matchlocks, too, and over the marble balls. The kegs which had served me in my assault had been mostly cast up on the beach, though a few were still tossing about in the surf.

Both horses were halfway down the strand toward the other river outlet. Because the natives evidently considered them miraculous and sacred creatures, nothing whatever seemed to have happened to them.

I lay down, making myself very small upon the ground, and watched for perhaps an hour. A few warriors came out, stood on the ridge, and tossed down something for the horses. This was maize or Indian corn, and they clapped their hands in glee when the animals ate it with relish.

As quietly as possible I went back into the jungle to think out what I was to do, and also to find some food. The horses at their corn whetted my appetite, already keen enough forsooth without whetting. One of the forest trees was of foliage so thick and compact I was sure it would turn off a shower, and it looked something like our horsechestnuts. It was a kind of legume, with pods that had three or four swellings along their lengths, wherein I found green peas, or mealy kernels like peas,

that served me very well for breakfast.

When I ceased repining and began to think practical thoughts, the semblance of a plan came to me.

After darkness had cloaked the world again, I re-approached the cannon emplacement. My eyes roved about in search of native torches burning anywhere. I saw none, and I heard no human sounds. There was no motion across the river or along the ridge. The strip of sandy beach stretched northward in white solitude under the stars, having upon it naught but the shadowy forms of the horses.

Then a roar and a chorus of roars made me jump in terror. Quickly I recovered myself, recognizing this noise as coming from the river below me. It was the bellowing of the big crocodiles, compounding the sound of a bull and a bittern and louder than either.

By this time I had seen too much of their timidity to believe them dangerous. I descended the slope. A few slid into the water, *cuchug*, like heavy logs. I waited a minute or two and noiselessly lowered myself into the current. Then I realized how ridiculous it was to be quiet with my small body amidst the hubbub of these huge carcasses!

Across the stream, I walked down the beach, water squeezing out of my shoes and my wet garments clinging to the skin. I found the horses, which did not recognize me in the starlight. They snorted and darted away. Twice they did this before I was able to get close enough to the sorrel to speak his name and gentle him with soothing talk until I had hold of him, and soon afterwards the gray also. They had halters on but nothing else, having been ridden bareback after the cannon were taken off. The halter reins had been broken by being stepped on, so that only short pieces swung from the rings.

I walked between their heads, up the beach and down to the stream edge. Here I climbed on the sorrel, finally urged him into the water, and went across on his back. I returned and swam the gray over.

Though the cannon were light as cannon go, they were regarded ordinarily as being too much for one man to place on a horse's back. Pico and I usually lifted one of them together. Now, moreover, they had to be pulled out of the water.

With the guns were all the saddle and harness material that went with them, consisting in the total of a large quantity of leather. Couldn't I grope under the water and unfasten enough strap to go around a horse's neck like a collar and then to reach back and be tied to a cannon? If I also pulled for all I was worth, couldn't a horse so harnessed drag the load out of the river and two or three cubits up the slope? Then with the horse standing below in the water, it would not be difficult for me to lift the gun at a level onto his back.

The cannon with part of the muzzle showing was the one I chose to extricate first. Some of the straps were so much submerged that I could not reach the fastenings with my fingers and still hold my nose above water; and I had to keep ducking under. But after a deal of work the gun was taken up according to plan. I meant to let the other one stay in the river for the present, awaiting some daylight chance of getting it out.

IN the darkness, with only the light of stars and no moon, I could not tell the contents of the beached kegs. I expected the containers to be perfectly dry inside, for both those of Bernardo Cruz and those of the Guadalquiver Gunpowder Works had been manufactured by the best coopers in Spain. Since I could not make out in the gloom those marked *su*, *c* and *s*, I had no choice but to collect them all. We originally had six, besides the ready-mixed keg, three of charcoal and three of sulphur. How many of saltpetre Pico had been bringing in the boat, I did not know, but I judged at least a dozen.

I found a total of nine kegs and tried in vain to retrieve a tenth out of the surf. I carried these to the river bank and started taking them over one by one. Then, as the swimming began to fatigue me, I bethought me of the straps and now these could be used to lash a number of kegs together.

By diving, I secured one stone ball and one of the matchlocks.

When daylight came, I had a workable artillery position, a matchlock ready to fire, my two horses, and enough gunpowder to make this quiet cove thunderously echo close upon a hundred times. I felt much better, much less forlorn and helpless. Now if the natives returned in warlike temper, I was somewhat equipped to disperse them and to hold them off through a siege. But I was not foolhardy and reckless enough to shoot off the cannon in brazenness to bring them back. I waited till noon, retrieving more cannon balls, the second cannon, the rest of the matchlocks.

Early in the afternoon, a group of them came, saw me, saw the horses, saw the cannon restored. My presence was no longer a secret. I might as well let them know I was not helpless. I fired Portable No. 1, hitting the trunk of a tree not six cubits from them. They darted off, never looking back, never halting once.

Possibly two hours later, the chief, his face painted black, and five councillors, their faces painted red, came down to the river bank opposite me. I wondered what had happened to the sixth councillor, whether he had been wounded. The chief had a flag of truce. Attendants carried food.

By signs he made me understand they were friends, not enemies. Indeed I had done them

no wrong until forced to kill one and wound several in a warfare brought on by my evil countrymen. He invited me to come and live among them as his son. I shook my head no. Then the *Capitana's* longboat was brought from some concealment. He indicated by more signs that this, filled with food, would be traded for the horses.

Here were two new possibilities. I could live as the chief's honorable son beside this anchorage into which other Spanish ships might some day come to take me away. Or I would have a boat and much food so I could go back up the coast by sea. Previously there had been my own plan—to load up the horses with the two cannon, the matchlocks, and as many of the kegs as they could carry in addition.

I asked the old Honduran for time to think it over. Having these three lines of action open to me was distractingly different from having only the one I had worked out for myself in my loneliness and desperation.

Two of the attendants brought the food over to my side of the river. After they left I went down and picked it up and ate it gratefully.

I reached my decision about an hour before dawn—to go by land with the two horses as I originally intended. This presented the problem of getting the cannon across the stream, since the guns were too heavy or at least too awkward for the horses to swim with. By means of the straps and kegs I arranged a raft. On the north side I loaded each animal with a cannon, four kegs, and a matchlock. I carried a brace of matchlocks so I would have two immediate shots in any tight situation. I took with me what was left over of the food.

I hoped to get well started before the natives were up and about. It was best to steal away like this without further discussion.

They had not posted a sentinel. The only human presence was a bearded corpse alternately brought toward the beach and taken back by the waves. The only sound was the mixture of a bittern's call and bellowing from the crocodiles at the river I had forever quitted.

I crossed the other stream, reloaded on its farther shore, and began my long journey that I meant should last as long as the horses held out, until I reached Gracias a Dios, until I went all the distance beyond it where the storms had been, on and on until I saw a Spanish sail and signalled it with a cannon.

But the patched and weathered canvas of Columbus' caravels had been the only sails seen on this coast since the world began. He did not intend to come this way again, but to voyage through a southern strait and thence to Cipango and Cathay and Calicut.

So would there ever be another Spanish sail?

Or how long would the horses survive to carry the heavy guns, that I might have them to fire if I saw a ship and not merely stand on the beach to wave unseen and let it go on without me? Or still having the cannon, how long could I keep the gunpowder, or what perils would early exhaust the eight kegs there on the horses?

As I went along, leading the heavily loaded sorrel and gray, I was suddenly assailed by uncertainty and doubt as by a blow. I sat down in the sand in front of the horses, hugged my knees in my hands, and looked out across the wide waters. Was I selecting the best of the three ways open to me, or the worst?

I TRAVELED fast. My object was to get beyond the friendly pursuit of these tribesmen. They might force me to return and live with them. I hoped to make five or six leagues before dark.

The sandy margin of the sea was my roadway—unobstructed except by shallow streams always easily fordable where the current fanned out to join the waves combing the beach.

My supply of food was sufficient to last me for the day. Once I caught sight of a maize field a short distance inland and went to it and plucked several ears for the horses.

Just before dark I found a meadow back about fifty cubits from the edge of the water, on high ground to afford a view of the sea. I still clung to the hope that the ships might possibly turn back, believing what I wanted to believe in face of Columbus' well-known habit of never giving up what he attempted. I kept both cannon ready to shoot, not only for protection but for signals in case a sail appeared. I did not make a fire, though I often wished for one during a night of fitful sleep.

On the second day I had to forage for food. This consisted of roots and wild fruits of the kind the natives had given us. I judged I made another five leagues or so of distance.

I recognized a few landmarks I had seen from the deck of the *Capitana*. A few canoes went by, well out beyond the rollers, but on land I did not run into any natives.

Fully sheltered from the dew and any showers that might come up, I made my camp that second night under the close-foliaged kind of tree that bore pods and peas.

I staked out the horses three hundred cubits distant in a sunken, grassy bowl. They were now sufficiently accustomed to green food to eat as much as they wanted. The cannon straps furnished long tethers.

For a bed I set up the kegs in two rows of four each and covered the ground between them thickly with boughs—and using boughs also for a roof and at the back. The four loaded matchlocks were in that snug den with me, two on either side. One cannon was outside at the head, one outside at the foot. I could have either fuse burning in two seconds.

About midnight I woke and rose up with such suddenness that I threw off the bough-roof resting on the keg tops instead of sliding out from under them toward the foot. What aroused me was the horses. I could not see them in the sunken bowl but I heard them running and snorting to make me think they were attacked by savage animals.

I speeded to them with a pair of matchlocks, calling to the animals to quiet them as I ran. When I came to the rim of the meadow, I saw a half dozen men scurrying off—thievish natives. I shot into them with both guns but did not see one of them fall as they hastened away.

I went on down to calm the frightened horses, rubbing their trembling legs and quivering flesh. In a short time they began to crop the lush grass again and I left them, meaning to stand guard for a while at the rim until they had enough food and then to lead them back to my camp under the tree for the rest of the night.

From this point to which I had ascended I could look back to camp. I saw it was surrounded by natives who let out no cry but remained as quiet as they had been in coming.

I hesitated what to do, as well I might—whether to mount a horse, and, leading the other one, flee; or to mount and approach the savages; or to approach or flee on foot. The total space of time I debated the harsh alternatives was not more than thirty seconds, when there came to me from the camp three loud words in Spanish, "Come here, Francisco!"

It was a voice I thought silenced forever in the profundity of the sea—the voice of Zorilla!

THE camp had two concentric rows of savages thickly around it. In the second row, as I came up, I saw Zorilla and instinctively pointed a matchlock at him between the heads and shoulders of Indians, and, then remembering, lowered it.

"Yes," taunted Zorilla, "it's empty, both are empty, but these two are loaded."

The butts of the two remaining matchlocks were on the ground between his still chained legs. The barrels leaned against the slack chain still extending from hand to hand. He had the cannon-lighter in his fingers.

"You couldn't shoot," I said, coming closer. "So I'll just ring your neck with my two hands."

Four savages barred the way with spears.

"No," he answered. "I can't shoot, not with these fetters on. Practically speaking, we are both unarmed. A truce is the only thing."

"A truce with you, Zorilla?" I cried.

"As soon as you get used to the idea, you will see it is the only sensible thing to do."

"With the worst villain that ever came out of Spain?"

"What other choice do you have?"

I walked away, expecting his savage retainers would prevent me. But they let me go. I mounted the sorrel and, leading the gray, came out upon the rim of the meadow. Again I hesitated. Should I go back to the natives I had left at the cove? Or should I go on ahead, completely unarmed, without the one thing that gave the white man superiority in this wild land, without his means of getting game for food, for signaling a sail, for protecting himself against ferocious animals?

I rode up to camp, where the two concentric circles had not changed. But Zorilla was sitting on a keg, no longer holding the matchlocks. He said nothing. He waited for me to speak, and I did.

"What are the conditions?"

"You will remove these chains."

"You know that is impossible. I have no file. To scratch through a link with metal from the cannon would take weeks."

"I mean unlock them. The key is here."

"Then why didn't your obedient natives do it for you long ago?"

"I couldn't make them understand. The key is tied tight to the handcuffs. I can't get at it myself. I have spent hours trying to tell them to unfasten it and put it in the hole of one of the clasps and turn it until it clicks. It is impossible. My directions only confuse them and set them to doing all kinds of crazy things—once polishing the links, once wrapping the clasps with cotton cloth, once starting to fill the keyholes with natural gum until I screamed out no, and jerked away. The simple process of releasing me cannot be communicated to them by signs. They have never seen a lock and key before, just the same as they have never seen a gun. To complicate matters, they seem to think the chains are symbols of some great honor, not much different from wearing a crown. They make me helpless, but artificial helplessness among savages, and having to be waited on at every turn, are marks of royalty and importance."

"And something like it is not unknown in Spain," I said. "Soft, white hands that cannot work, tender skins that cannot stand the cold, clothes that enfeeble action, ignorance of the simplest machines—these and many others make a person aristocratic . . ."

"Unfasten me and talk later," interrupted Zorilla.

"No," I answered. "Your natives might then lose respect for you, and turn the tables and make you their servant. Better to be a king in chains. You will never have to do another lick of work as long as you live. And it must have been strenuous at Cadiz, torturing so many people in the inquisition, must have been very strenuous. How old are you, Zorilla."

"Thirty-four."

"In this fine climate and living in the out-of-doors you might last out forty years more

—two-score happy, toilless years as a king in chains."

"You fool, long before that I could talk their language and tell them to unlock me."

"Quite possible, but you would be like an uncrowned ruler, like a dethroned and dishonored king, reduced to being a slave. And, if chains can indeed transmit majesty, what ones more than these, the chains of a man greater than a monarch, the chains of Columbus?"

"CEASE the idle talk," Zorilla said. "Unlock me and I give you my word I will not harm so much as a hair of your head and the natives will not, upon my oath, Francisco."

"Your oath, Zorilla?"

"Go on by yourself, then. We are two whites in the wilderness of the New World. We can work together and save each other. We can be enemies and destroy each other. It is not a matter of friendship or affection or respect or even trust. It is a matter of self-preservation. You cannot kill me. The native bodyguard will not let you. They will protect me every hour of the day and night. And I don't want to kill you; at a nod they would do it, and you know it."

"I know nothing of the kind. I am mounted on a horse; your natives cannot overtake me afoot. I can return to the natives I left. Mine can war against yours until you are dead in your chains. Then I can dwell among them or depart—as it pleases me—with the horses, the matchlocks, the cannons, the gunpowder."

"Not the gunpowder, Francisco. If you leave here, I swear I will have the natives stave in the head of every keg and empty the contents into the surf and upon the sand."

"You wouldn't do that, you scoundrel!"

"An hour after you leave here—if you go and do not return within that time—I swear it will be done."

"Why I should respect your oath I do not know. But raise both your hands, since you cannot raise the right one alone. And swear that the natives will not harm me, that you will not. Swear that you will restore the cannon, the other two matchlocks, the shot and balls, and the eight kegs of gunpowder."

"I swear with this exception—a matchlock, the keg of ready-mixed gunpowder, and one horse will be given to me. With only two white men in a country of vast bigness, I don't consider it right for one to have both horses, both cannon, all the matchlocks, all the shot and powder. Some division is only fair, I say. I don't specify a cannon, because I do not know how to shoot it and would be timid about trying to learn. But if I have one of the animals, I suppose we'll just have to give the other cannon to the natives, since your horse could not carry both and I would ride my horse. Is it a bargain on those terms?"

"No."

I put my heels to the sorrel's flank, and holding to the halter rein of the gray, descended to the beach at a gallop. I expected a band of natives to dart out after me, but none of them moved from the double circle. I halted in indecision in front of the Indian canoes drawn up on the beach.

I looked south and north; and while I looked eight Indians started slowly toward the beach, with the eight powder kegs on their shoulders. A ninth carried a marble ball to hammer in the heads with. Zorilla himself came at the end, not hobbling down the bank and across the sand but lifted above the ground by a tall savage on either side.

I called out: "What are the conditions if I unlock you?"

"The ones I said."

"You repeat your promise that neither you nor the natives will harm me in the least?"

"I repeat it."

"Swear it."

"I swear."

"Very well. Signal your natives to move back and give me room."

The key was attached by metal bands or coils to a link close to the right bracelet. These coils would normally have been pried open by a steel rod; it was all I could do to free the key by hand. When I had it in my fingers, Zorilla looked at it with a hurried eagerness. I stooped and first unlocked the foot fetters, dropping the chain in the sand for a native to pick up later. Then with two turns of the key, I undid the handcuffs. It dropped with a clank on the other one.

Zorilla cried upon the instant of that clank: *"Golo! Golo!"*

Two powerful Indians grabbed me.

Zorilla himself and not a native picked up the chains, first the foot ones, then the hand ones, putting them on me and testing them to see that they were securely locked. Whereupon he was troubled by what to do with the key. He put it in his pocket. Then, thinking better of it, he fastened it back the way it was.

When all this treachery was finished, and not before, he spoke to me: "I told you I will not hurt you and I will not. My men will not. Just as I said. I have simply arranged it so you will not hurt me. You are my prisoner, Francisco. Yet, true to my promise, I will not injure so much as a hair of your head. I will protect you. I will even have to wait on you. I will be like a big and tender and loving brother to you, Francisco."

Whereat, his great hairy right fist went against my left jaw so hard that I stood there groggily in the sand.

I was now completely at the mercy of this vile Spaniard.

"Why don't you kill me and be done with it?" I asked. "What is one more death to the Inquisition torturer? Have you kept count of all you have killed in your day?"

"On my soul, not one, Francisco, I have not killed one. I have only made many wish they were dead."

"You could turn me loose here fettered hand and feet and I would die before very long and by your way of thinking you would not be killing me. Why don't you do it?"

"Your companionship, Francisco. It will be lonesome enough in all conscience for the two of us; it is unbearable when there is only one, when you find yourself listening, listening for a Spanish word, and you know it may never fall upon your ear again except when you speak it, when it is uttered by your own voice, when you scream it out frantically at first, and then in lower tones until it seems to come from the lips of a ghost. Your companionship, Francisco, is why I save you. I may be irritable at times, very irritable, but because you are a Spaniard and speak Spanish words I won't in some playful mood leave you behind."

"But just before we get back to civilization, if we ever do, you mean for me to have an accident?"

"You put it baldly, very baldly, Francisco. Now, if I had your word of honor that there would be no report of the mutiny . . ."

"Columbus will report it."

"Not Columbus. I doubt if he ever gets back to Spain. He may be marooned, he may be drowned, he may be shot accidently, he may die in his cot in one of his deliriums—anyone of a dozen things can happen to him. Captain Porras will be in charge of the squadron when it returns. It was a joke to make eight of us walk the plank when Captain Porras, sent by the great Fonseca, is the leader; and half the men are ready to join him in revolt, knowing it will all be justified when they get back to Spain. That, Francisco, is the situation with the Admiral of the Ocean Sea, and you are not in much of a position right now to warn him."

CHAPTER XV

CITY OF THE DEAD

THE cannon, shot and ball, and seven kegs of gunpowder were loaded into the native canoes. We kept the ready-mixed keg and the four matchlocks, Zorilla reloading the two empty ones under my direction and giving them to me as my pair in case I specified a mixture to make the guns dangerous for the user. Zorilla was thoroughly suspicious of me and in every act like this he was careful.

I made the mistake of telling him I preferred the sorrel as a mount. It caused him to assign me the gray, though forsooth it made little difference. Zorilla could and did ride astride, but I must needs sit sidewise the whole day long, not even being able to change off by walking, as a result of being hobbled. Spaniards often ride their mules so, and the position was no great discomfort in itself; I speak only of its monotony.

The natives could not understand how one man would divest himself of the chains to transfer them at once to someone else. Notwithstanding the slap Zorilla gave me, they did not seem to be sure he had not conferred a high honor upon me, particularly because that one blow was the single exception to his derisive courtesy, which passed for the real thing with them. Moreover, they saw Zorilla perform various small services for me, which perforce he had to do on account of my fettered helplessness.

These natives, being Misskitos, would not accompany us beyond the Mosquito Coast, not beyond Gracias a Dios. This much of the journey took us about ten days. From them we learned a few words, but, best of all, what wild foods to seek and where to seek them. Zorilla was no less vigilant of the sea than I was. But we saw no sail.

When we turned west, we edged the sea that had been so furious. It was calm and tranquil now. We met other natives, none of them hostile, all of them temporarily accommodating, but none willing to go any distance with us or to transport our baggage.

Having to carry everything overland worked a greater hardship on Zorilla than it did on me. At first he yielded to me when I declared we could not leave any of it behind. Walking, himself, he would take the horses and the baggage onward about a league. Meanwhile, I hobbled along, covering as much distance as I could. Then he unloaded, mounted one horse, led the other for me to ride, and came back to get me.

He became increasingly annoyed over this arrangement and gave me the choice whether to abandon four kegs of the gunpowder or one of the cannon.

"We can't leave any of the kegs," I explained. "If we do, it will destroy proper parts of each ingredient. One is ready-mixed. Of the other seven, five are saltpetre, and one each sulphur and charcoal. That makes a little over fourteen percent each for charcoal and sulphur and a little over seventy-one percent for saltpetre, a fairly good proportion but close to the smallest amount of saltpetre ever used by Bernardo Cruz."

"What does that waddling pouter-pigeon know about gunpowder?"

"As much as anybody in Spain. This is all his gunpowder."

"Leave one of the cannon behind, then."

"Why not take these fetters off me? That would solve everything. The horses could carry all the baggage, and both of us could walk. As

it is, you have to figure for me to ride."

"Turn you loose and have to watch you every minute, to prevent you from killing me?"

"I swear to keep a truce."

"I can't trust you, Francisco. You would think what I did would justify you in breaking any word you gave. See, you are moving your fingers; you intend to cross them when you promise. I had mine crossed but you didn't see."

"How long were you with the Inquisition?"

"Eight years."

"You started at twenty-six. You are used to the quibbling and equivocation of that terrible tribunal. You never encountered honest, logical reasoning. You are used to one thing said and another meant, to forked tongues and crossed fingers. Zorilla, I will keep my promise."

"What do you give your word to do?"

"On this trip I will not harm you for what has happened in the past. You treat me fair now and all the rest of the time, and I will treat you the same. You don't have to watch, or keep awake, or be suspicious. But the promise ends the moment we see a Spanish sail or approach within one league of a Spanish settlement or meet any Spaniard."

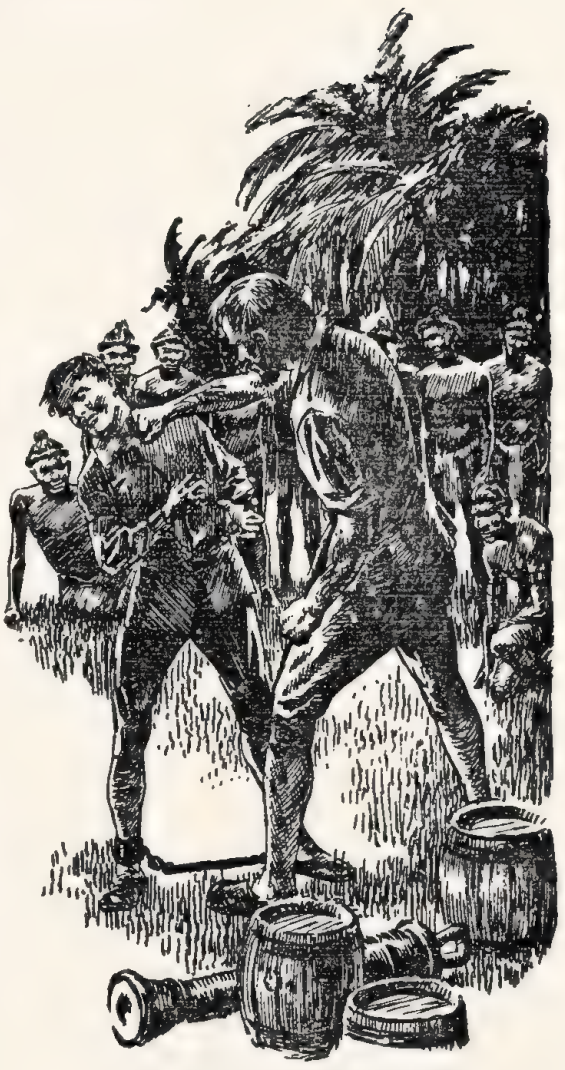
But he could not bring himself to believe me or trust me. So he came back to the question of leaving the cannon, since he accepted my explanation about the kegs. One morning, after breaking camp, he left one of the big guns—Portable No. 2—where we had set it down the previous evening. He had tied four kegs and some balls on the gray and motioned me to get on that animal with his assistance, while he led the sorrel carrying the other cannon, the other four kegs, and two matchlocks. I went over to Portable No. 2 and sat down on its muzzle.

He let me sit there for about ten minutes and then stood in front of me with a pointed matchlock. "I give you five minutes to obey."

I said nothing but let more than that many minutes pass, gazing out to sea, as though I were quite alone with my meditations. After a while I looked at him. "It has been fully ten minutes," I said.

"Pup from Cadiz, I can't kill you. But I won't have any more of this going forward a league and then coming back to get you, so that the horses travel nearly three leagues for every league of actual distance made. Today I will loosen the chain from one ankle. You can drag it and lead the gray ahead. He can carry all the shot and balls and I will take all the matchlocks. The cannon on the gray must be empty and you must stay twenty paces ahead. You must do all the sea-gazing because my gaze will be on you."

Before we camped, he clasped the chain to the other ankle. We built a fire each evening. Zorilla had to gather all the wood, but each of us



His hairy fist went against my jaw and I stood there groggily in the sand.

refueled the blaze whenever he woke up. On this particular night we were brought simultaneously to a sitting posture by a rustle in the surrounding thickets and a roar. Zorilla got the rest of the way to his feet, put dry limbs on the fire and grabbed a matchlock.

A huge spotted cat stepped out into the firelight—a jaguar.

I jumped instinctively to get a matchlock and then sat down. "Better unfasten me," I suggested. "At least my hands."

"I would rather trust the jaguar," said Zorilla, not particularly afraid. "The fire will keep him off."

The animal wove himself stealthily among the trees, in a circle about the camp, now his head or a little part of his spotted body in view, now completely concealed, but disturbing the foliage for all his stealth. The animal prowled

about for a good hour. Then he came within twenty paces where a little of the warmth blew to him caressingly. He sat upon his haunches and hit his long tail upon the ground like a club. If either of us stepped a little way toward him, he lay back his ears.

"The fire will keep him off," repeated Zorilla, reluctant to empty a charge, since he would have to do the reloading, and do it under my direction, of which he never ceased to be suspicious. After a few minutes the big cat got up and walked off, and we went back to sleep.

BY now we were considerably past the point where Columbus' ships had hit the Honduran coast. About forty leagues beyond that point we came to a bay, with a wide but sluggish river connecting it with a lake, as we saw when we followed up the stream to find a narrow enough place to cross. The lake stretched inland so far that its circumnavigation through almost impenetrable brush or in boggy marsh would amount to two or three days' travel. Yet we were treated to a sight that made us reluctant to raft over the watercourse. Out beyond the reeds of the shore was a log slowly drifting with the lazy current. This was being used as a boat by a fifteen-foot anaconda. He had himself coiled around it twice. His tail stuck up slightly and his head much higher, crooked like a floating swan's. I asked Zorilla to strike a light and stand ready to touch it to the fuse when I had the cannon-backed horse pointed right.

The marble ball missed each coil of the serpent, but hit the log amidships, causing it to recoil some feet and one end to jump out of the water. The snake was not killed nor even wounded, but his coils came loose in a hurry. He was a sinuous log himself as he swam toward the lake. This sort of inhabitant made us somewhat timid about crossing on our usual kind of raft of drift logs and kegs, the horses swimming and ourselves towed, four rather well-fed bodies exposed—nearly a ton of meat altogether.

We had to risk the horses, but this time we as well as the cannon perched on top. Even in this situation Zorilla would not unfasten me, choosing these special risks from nature in preference to ones from a human he had wronged. We crossed without danger but not without incident. We grounded in deep mud while several cubits from the farther shore. I bogged down with my fettered feet until Zorilla got a horse to me and I was dragged out by hanging to the straps of the cannon harness.

Our direction changed north again. We had now been on the road nearly two months and had come about two hundred leagues.

The next day, on our new route, we passed a number of hollow logs that seemed to be full of animals. Soon afterwards we heard behind us a noise like galloping horses in a world where we knew that our horses were the only ones.

We looked back to see a herd of small pigs, about a hundred of them, savagely and furiously in pursuit of us, with grunts and squeaks now mixing with the thuds of their small hooves. In any hazard, Zorilla's first instinct was to fetter me, lest danger present an opening for my escape. He jerked me to a stop and locked the ankle bracelet which I had been dragging as usual.

The fierce-tempered pigs were grizzly brown, with white collars. They kept coming until they were close enough for us to see their angry eyes and short tusks like lancets in their opened mouths. Zorilla shot one, but this did not halt the rush; he emptied the three other matchlocks, felling one each time at that close range; but they were too stupid to stop or flee or know fear.

"Give me a chance, Zorilla!" I cried. "Undo me!"

"No, stay bound and take them!"

With his knife he cut the harness straps of the sorrel. The cannon and the kegs fell off. He jumped on, hit the gray in the flanks, and the man and two horses deserted me to the rush of the animals.

In the storm at sea, in the native attack, in the *auto-da fé* at Seville, I was never surer of the end than now.

A few leaders crowded in, aimed at my legs, leaped up at me. I used the cannon and three of the kegs as breastworks or rather as fences at my rear and sides, and the fourth keg as a shield. My fettered hands did not give play and reach enough for me to take hold of each end of the keg, but the one I chose for this purpose still had two leather belts around it, connected on each side by two vertical straps that pulled them toward the bulging center and held them tight. I edged my fingers under these and kneeled and held the keg between myself and the leaping pigs.

There were at least a hundred of them and this siege would have exhausted me in the end. But Zorilla returned—not to assist me but to learn if I were dead. He halted the horses about thirty cubits off and saw me still battling. With the strong cask I could throw the attackers back in rebound of their own savagery, their sharp teeth not being able to get hold of the rounded surface.

"Zorilla," I called, "my strength can't last much longer. Ride through the herd at a run, ride them down. Lead the gray; I will grab the strap that's still around his neck. Make off to the side, into the surf."

The herd followed us to the very edge of the water. We waited at depths that would drown them until they gave up the siege and trotted back toward their hollow logs.

WE TRAVELED northward something like a hundred and fifty Spanish leagues. At different times we saw groups of natives and received aid from them. They called themselves Yucatans, as nearly as we could make out the name.

One morning, after we had gone many days along the edge of this Yucatan country, we saw towers and pinnacles some leagues inland, and the upper part of a pyramid. This was unmistakably some great city, possibly Calicut and we turned toward it, expecting to come upon a broad highway. The approach continued to be through a forested region with only narrow, confused trails to follow. But at intervals, whenever we came to a clearing, we could see the lofty masonry of the city towers rising high above the trees and thus we were guided in the absence of roads.

We came upon a crude village of natives. We could not understand such a settlement at the very threshhold of some rich capital. We pointed to the heights of stone a little distance beyond. All but these lofty features were still concealed by the surrounding woods. The natives looked at us, at the horses, at Zorilla in particular, and ran into their huts. Straightway they came out again, accompanied by others, and all followed at a respectful distance behind.

We arrived at carved gate columns and a pavement. Straight ahead of us was the great pyramid, the summit of which we had seen at a distance. There were other smaller pyramids, and temples and castles and columns and walls. The place covered an area almost as large as Cadiz.

There were no sentinels so we entered between the gateless columns, and walked along the pavement. Nobody kept us out; nobody welcomed us; and we heard none of the din and noise that usually comes up from such a large city as this.

We looked back. The natives had stopped just outside the gateway. Zorilla motioned them to follow but they remained stock still. We went back to them to learn the reason for this strange hesitancy to enter.

Four or five came and kneeled to him, touching their foreheads to the ground and crying out: *"Ek teelob! Ek teelob!"*

"Do you see them?" asked Zorilla. "Do you hear them? That word *teelob* is similar to the word the *Misskitos* used for white. And various tribes have used *ek* for lord. They are calling me a white god, Francisco. They are worshiping me. Kneel to me, too, Francisco, so they will know I am indeed a god."

"I kneel to you, you unspeakable scoundrel?"

He came over to me, stooped down, and locked the other anklet. Then he slapped me on one jaw and, as I reeled, on the other. The natives saw this, and they saw I was bound. It gave them the impression I was Zorilla's slave.

Zorilla pointed to his mouth. They nodded yes. They pointed at my mouth. Zorilla, in his benevolence, nodded yes, meaning I was also to be fed.

He beckoned them inside the gateway. They shook their heads no. He grabbed a boy and literally had to drag him between those two carved columns and a little way forward on the pavement. Though Zorilla had not hurt him at all, as soon as he was released he fled crying as if a great affliction had come to him or some unforgivable transgression had been forced upon him.

The natives brought food, set it down just outside the city entrance, bowed low, and retired.

"Fetch it to me," Zorilla commanded. "Pup from Cadiz, fetch it, I said. You can use your hands enough to lift it up. Hereafter in their presence act as my slave, out of their presence as my servant. Now that I have these worshipers, I do not need you any more. If you do not obey me, I will kill you."

"Let us take the cannon off the horses," I said, "so they can graze in the courtyard on the fresh grass growing between the pavement stones."

"No," objected Zorilla. "We'll keep the horses with us, and the cannon ready for instant use. We may need them in a hurry. You go ahead of me in case we are shot at."

In this way we proceeded, I in front, slowly, cautiously; Zorilla behind me, still more so, leading and walking between both the sorrel and the gray so they would serve as defences in the event of need. He would let me get still farther in advance and then, when my passage had confirmed the absence of danger, would hasten to where I was, irritated because the tired and hungry horses did not lead fast enough but reached down their muzzles to crop the grass. Our progress, wherein I was so disproportionately exposed, was along the paved route that went from the entrance gates for four hundred cubits to the pyramid.

"The inhabitants here must be warlike and vicious," remarked Zorilla. "There is something about them that keeps the Yucatans back there so terribly afraid that they will not enter. But why don't they show themselves? Why don't we hear them, Francisco?"

"They are probably waiting for us in ambush."

"Do you really think so?"

"Why else would they keep out of sight? We can expect to hear any moment a terrible war-whoop and have them rush upon us with javelins, swords, clubs, and bows and arrows, or it is more likely that people who build a great town like this have matchlocks and cannon. You can either free one hand and one leg or fight them by yourself if they should attack."

He came up to me and ordered me to hold

out my hands. "They don't shake, they don't tremble," he said. "You are not afraid. I won't release you."

CHAPTER XVI

STALEMATE

AS WE walked on, we saw no persons threatening to assail us or fearfully hiding or hurrying off in headlong flight. We saw nobody at all. The place was enveloped in complete silence except for the tread of our feet and the horses' hooves upon the pavement stones.

Then in the universal abandonment there was a premonition of life—a sound very faint yet heavy, just enough to give the sense of a diluted stillness. We huddled together at the horses' heads in instinctive timidity. We two enemies, Zorilla and I, found comfort in each other's presence as our tensely listening ears caught what was lower than a whisper, a gliding, barely perceptible dragging, a smooth movement that was hardly more than silence.

Athwart our way, ten cubits in front of us, a head appeared, shaped like the head of a dog, but followed by the body of a snake, huge and long, reaching from gayly marked crown to rusty red tail as far as Zorilla and I together would have reached if we had been lying down feet to feet. It was like a log stretching all the way across the pavement. It moved on and disappeared and the disturbed dust in its wake was the width of half a cubit. When it was gone, our breaths came back to us in a sudden heavy intake.

But we still stood huddled and motionless, not able at once to shake off the effect of having received a warning and a sign.

"It's just a boa constrictor," I said at last. "Travelers at Cadiz told me they only wrapped around animals they could swallow. We are too big, as are the horses."

On our right, halfway to the pyramid, was a two-story building.

"It looks like a temple," said Zorilla.

"Let's go inside," I suggested.

"They may be in there with their weapons ready to kill us," Zorilla replied. "You enter, Francisco, and report to me if it is safe. When they see your hands and legs fettered, they will probably be more curious than hostile, and not be quite so ready to attack you as they would me."

"You vile coward," I cried out. "Don't try to put upon it the face of reason. I will go, helpless as I am, and leave you and your trembling carcass here out of danger."

The steps were made of thick stones and the length of the shackles barely allowed me to get from one tier to the other. Finally I arrived at the entrance. A heavy stone door had sagged down and rested solidly on the floor, but it lacked a little over a foot of being closed. I squeezed through this and found myself in an entrance hall with carved columns and with corridors stretching away in three directions. I went down the longest one, past many chambers, some open and empty, some with doors locked or jammed so I could not even open them.

The tap, tap of my feet upon the tiled floor was all the noise I heard, until there came to me the anxious shout of Zorilla.

"Francisco, Francisco, are you there? Are you alive?"

While I had not seen anyone nor heard the slightest human movement, I could not be sure that there might not be people behind the closed portals or in the other two wings. But down these other corridors, it was the same.

There was absolutely no sign that anyone dwelt here or had done so for generation upon generation.

I came back to the door and squeezed through it again.

"Francisco!" cried Zorilla in relief. "I was afraid you had left me."

"The place is empty," I said. "It doesn't contain a soul and looks like it hasn't been lived in for a thousand years."

We went on through a continuing solitude and finally arrived at the base of the pyramid.

"I'm going to climb it," said Zorilla. "From the top I can get a view of the whole town. It's easier than walking over the place—and safer. If there is any human being here at all, I can see him. You stay here with the horses, Francisco."

"Let me climb the pyramid with you," I begged.

"You can't," said Zorilla. "The chain doesn't give you enough reach to go from one high step to another. The stones are very big. You couldn't possibly climb it."

"I could, if you would loosen the chains from around one ankle."

Zorilla said nothing but stooped and unlocked the left leg shackle.

"Go ahead of me!" he ordered.

AT THE top we could indeed command a view of the whole town and see that in truth it was as many leagues around as Cadiz. There was another entrance off to the west, much closer to the pyramid, not more than a hundred cubits distant. Crumbling ramparts with many broken places hemmed in the rectangle of the city, and the encroaching trees and jungle came up to the walls. We caught no sight of any movement within the slumbering precincts. The horses below were cropping the green blades of grass in rich pasturage where once had been the gathering place of multitudes.

At the top we could command a view of the whole city and see that in truth it was as many leagues around as Cadiz.

Zorilla carried a matchlock, but I was unarmed and, of course, would have been unable to use a gun because my hands were still fettered. Nevertheless, while my vile captor and I stood on the summit of the pyramid and surveyed the ruins of that ancient town, a resolve entered my mind, and it no sooner entered than I acted upon it. With unencumbered agility, I jumped from one level of masonry to the level below, and the chains rattled behind me on the

stones as I went. Like a chamois I bounded down the side of the pyramid, with Zorilla calling to me to stop and firing the matchlock. But he was a poor shot. He missed. I bounded on down to the bottom, Zorilla following me less fast, because I had nimbler heels. I went immediately to the sorrel and turned him around so the muzzle of the cannon would be pointing at the pyramid. Then I made the horse kneel so I could cover Zorilla, who was prudent like a cat, and had stopped about halfway down when he saw I was maneuvering the gun into position.

"Stay where you are!" I commanded. "Come any closer or make any movement, and a marble ball will tear a hole through your worthless body. From now on, white god, you will do what I say. The tables are turned—I am in control!"

"So you are," acknowledged Zorilla reluctantly.

"Come down here and take the hand-fetters off!" I said.

"I'm afraid," said Zorilla. "You threatened to shoot me."

"Come on and unlock me."

"Zape! Chispas!" he spat out those old words of fury. "Pup from Cadiz, I obey!"

With this he leaped to the step above him and then to the step above that. Since the horse was already kneeling, the angle of the cannon would not permit its aim to go any higher. As he kept darting upward, he was getting completely out of reach. In order to cover him, I would have to take the cannon off and prop it up so that the muzzle would be at a sufficient tilt.

This I could not do with my fettered hands.

Zorilla from the summit called down to me in a jeering tone.

"Francisco, you were in control for maybe five minutes, maybe ten, but you're not in control now!"

"By Lucifer's Adam's apple," I shouted back, "you're not either!"

(End of Part III)

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where Readers, Writers and Adventurers Meet

IT'S a crowded session around the blaze this month. Several recruits to the ranks of our Writers' Brigade to introduce, plus a passel of old hands who want to get things off their chests. We'll bend our ear from an inconspicuous spot on the fringe of things and keep mum for a change—while the rest of you hold forth.

Here's Wallis Reef, who gives us "Un-Reversible Error" on page 52. He writes—

Of the first 100,000 in the wild scramble to the "Pikes Peak Gold Regions" in 1859, at least 50,000 turned back and of those who reached Cherry Creek more than half became discouraged and went home. Those who stayed were pretty rugged individuals. And the law enforcement officers who had to ride herd on these stick-it-outers were, by force of circumstance, committed to the theory that right was white and wrong was black with no softening shades in between.

It happened that my grandfather, John G. Melvin, was one of the '59ers who stayed. He cut logs, carted lumber across the plains by ox team, and built a two-story structure which he boasted was the largest hotel west of the Missouri. It became a stage station on the Smoky Hill Trail and was known as the "Twelve-mile House" because it was 12 miles from the settlement that became Denver.

Melvin fought with Col. John M. Chivington when the Confederates were defeated in the Battle of Glorieta Pass, New Mexico, the so-called "Gettysburg of the Southwest," and rode with him again when the Arapahoes and Cheyennes were wiped out in the Battle of Sand Creek, one of the most controversial incidents in Colorado history.

All of which is supposed to explain why I happened to be born in Denver and brought up on stories of how you plugged bad men on sight and found out who they were when you got around to it.

Sheriff Todd Driscoll grew out of this notion. A living counterpart was "Doc" Dawson, former marshal at Cripple Creek, who was chief deputy sheriff in Denver criminal court when the famous "million dollar bunco ring" was convicted in 1923. Covering the trial for the *Rocky Mountain News*, I heard Doc tell the head of the gang:

"I'll be sitting right behind you. If anybody starts anything I'll plug you first. After that I'll get the son-of-a-which who started the fracas." There was no trouble.

In 1919, I was with an oil company in Lusk, Wyoming, during the boom days of the Lance Creek field and had two men, brothers, old-time gun-slingers from the cattle-sheep wars, who were supposed to guard our claims against jumping. One day a couple of our men walked in and announced that rival claim-watchers had shot up their truck.

That night, without a word to me, the two brothers hooked log chains between the bumpers of a pair of heavy trucks and eased over the rise behind the shack from which the shots had been fired. One brother sat on the hood of each truck, a Winchester across his knees. The chain between the trucks ripped the shack into kindling and the rival gunmen lit out across the prairie faster than salt-stung coyotes.

"Warn't no fun," one of the brothers told me later. "They dropped their guns fust thing."

The breed of Doc Dawson, these two brothers and Todd Driscoll recognized only

the most exacting performance of duty; they would have felt unworthy with anything less.

On the personal side, I sold my first short story in 1913, attended the University of Denver for a time and in 1915 got a job as reporter on the old Denver *Times*. Enlisted as a mule skinner in 1917 and came out 18 months later a 2nd Lieut. of Infantry.

Spent 15 years on the *Rocky Mountain News* as reporter and city editor during the days we were supposed to find out whodunit ourselves instead of asking the dicks what clues they had dug up, if any. It was great fun, but every once in a while it meant hiding out from some strangely inquisitive state or federal grand jury about the time your by-line hit the street.

Served as special investigator for every local D.A. during the last 25 years and was drafted for similar work for the U.S. Senate Committee investigating the munitions industry. Covered almost every big crime story in the state since 1921, from the U.S. Mint robbery to the Fleagle gang and the Boettcher kidnaping; and executions from Eddie Ives, who was so little he had to be hanged twice, to a double gassing where two killers died inside the chamber and a spectator dropped dead outside at my elbow.

Spent nearly nine years as news editor and in charge of special events for a local radio station and during most of that time did a daily commentary that brought six threats of libel in the first eight weeks, mostly from outraged public officials. (There were two weeks when I fell down on the job.)

Ran for mayor of Denver in 1939 and limped in fourth in a field of nine but got revenge four years later when I managed a campaign for higher pay for firemen and policemen that polled more votes than the mayor received in being re-elected. Am married and have a daughter and a son.

One of these days you'll see a revival of the Pikes Peak-or-Bust days because industry is going to set up shop out here and utilize our great natural resources to make everything from nylons to autos.

Airplanes will take these products all over the globe, and nobody will be concerned because Cherry Creek is an inch deep and a yard wide. Did you know that on its banks we made warships that fought the Japs?

Meantime, while a lot of people are fretting themselves sick trying to coin the phrase, "Go West," I've kinda got another date with Todd Driscoll and Hank Abbott to see how those old codgers are going to get out of more trouble—if anyone's interested.

Sure we're interested!

Mr. Reef, we'd say, has plenty of catching-up to do, having waited thirty-two years to spin us a yarn. Let's have no more such shilly-shallying!

OUR request for a greeting to this department from William Langer chased the author of "Blood and Guts" all the way to Tinian before it caught up with him. Here's what he sent us from the Pacific—

I've passed most of my life in the States, yet I wasn't on this island more than a few hours before I realized that, strange and new as it was to me, it wasn't strange and new at all. Sounds paradoxical, doesn't it? Yet, it *was* familiar.

I looked at the rolling hills, sandy beach, thick jungle foliage and muddy dirt roads and thought, *this* could have been the island I described in "Blood and Guts." This tropical "paradise" could have been the one where Lawson, the company aid man, treated his casualties' physical ailments, and at the same time found the cure for his own spiritual troubles.

It makes me feel better, too, to think of it *that* way . . .

My own career has by no means been glamorous, in or out of the Army. I'm thirty-three years old, a graduate of Upsala College, and before the war I was writing radio scripts and material for house organs. After the war began, I continued to do the same. I got married in '37, had a child, so I wasn't called until the last day in 1943.

Most of my Army time has been occupied with training of one sort or another. However, for three months I was managing editor of *Range Finder*, published at Ft. Wadsworth, N. Y. This was broken up by another long period of training at Ft. Lewis, Washington; medical training this time, which resulted in my assignment to my present unit, the 309th Gen. Hospital, as a member of which I recently came overseas.

It was during my medical basic that I first realized what a wealth of genuine human material the work of the Medical Corps offered to the writer. "Blood and Guts" is the first story I did using this material, but there will be others, including a book centering around the Medical GI which I hope will be ready shortly after I leave the Army.

LAWTON FORD, whose pugilistic fantasy "You Ain't Gonna Believe This" appears on page 76, writes from Orange, N. J.—

I was very unhappy in the middle of World War No. 1, because the years were slipping away and I had done so little with my life. The U.S. Army, our Navy, our Marines, and the Canadians en masse had turned my application for service away with polite murmurs about brash children. So I told a British Army recruiting sergeant that I was eighteen and wanted in. He waved me away with instructions to come back when I became nineteen.

I walked around the block, near The Palmer House in Chicago, and went back. I said I was nineteen. I was in. I arrived

in the front lines in October 1918, and Jerry immediately gave up, leaving me stranded. I was sixteen.

Rather than crawl back into the class room I promptly enlisted again and was sent to Russia, (north) and Ireland, (south!) and Egypt, Syria, and Persia. Four years of this and I was tossed in front of a desk in New York City and told to forget the whole thing. But I couldn't.

I've been studying Egypt and medieval Mohammedan history ever since, writing occasionally to take the place of going back to Egypt. Perhaps my five-year-old daughter will someday go in my place, if I can get together enough "scratch" to send her. My wife says she'd rather go to California anyway.

WHEN we asked for something from the author of "Plumb Center" E. E. Halleran wrote his agent "if it's me *Camp-Fire* wants to meet you can pass along such personal facts as it's safe to acknowledge." Apparently E. E.'s a man with a dangerous past for not a jot or tittle about the guy was forthcoming. However, he was perfectly willing to shoot us the following about the article itself. Mr. Halleran says—

For some reason or other readers do not seem to realize that the writing of Westerns is quite as much a matter of research as is the writing of more serious literature. The hell of it is that the research is so exasperating. Historians of the West have been careless in spots and over-enthusiastic in others. Then there are the old-timers whose progressive memories complicate the whole problem. They remember so damned many things that never happened. A reputable—but careless—historian makes an inaccurate statement and enthusiastic oldsters hasten to recall their personal shares in the episode, each trying to outdo the other. In due time the real truth of the affair is so obscured by imagination that no one can tell what actually did happen.

The business of marksmanship is just a case in point. Uncle Joe Smith once met Wild Bill Hickok so he brags about his "friend" and his marksmanship. Grampaw Jones kinda remembers seeing Bill Cody so he bolsters his own ego by cooking up a yarn that will shade Uncle Joe's. Drag in the personal ambitions of a few more old coots and let a movie research scout loose among them. Oh, brother!

A couple of years ago a magazine carried an article of mine which referred to the Army's use of Hotchkiss guns at the Battle of Wounded Knee, a fact in strict accordance with every available authority and record. Immediately it drew fire from a reader who had been told by personal friends who had been in the fight that Rodman guns were used. We had quite a little argument. Nobody won. Probably they were Gatlings.

Gun cranks being what they are—and I'm one—it's likely that this article will draw fire. Oddly enough, the principal examples quoted to show the failings of our doughty heroes are taken from biographies which praise the gentlemen most highly. Wilstach, for example, sings the praise of Hickok but goes on to mention points which help to destroy the illusion. Burns does the same thing with Billy the Kid. The conclusions are mine and I think that anyone who has had experience with firearms will accept them as being just common sense. But maybe I'm wrong about that, too.

We've got a sneaking suspicion, too, that a chorus of controversy is going to rise from the ranks of the shooting fraternity and "students" of Western gun lore who happen to read "Plumb Center." You may fire when ready, gents, and we'll see who has to duck first!

DAY KEENE, who gives us "From the Halls of Montezuma" on page 89, boils himself down by night letter from below the Border in the following succinct paragraphs—

Background of show business, playing almost every whistle stop west of the Mississippi before I was twenty. But that was a long time ago. When stock and rep faded out and the other lads with whom I had worked took their crack at pictures and Hollywood, started to write and have been at it ever since.

Wrote soap chip operas until the Dreft got in my eyes. Thence to fiction. Hope to stay at it the rest of my life.

Partial to petite women, good whiskey, fast horses, and fast friends. Married the first, indulge in the second in moderation, have lost my shirt on the third and am favored with a few of the latter.

At present in Mexico in search of material but headed back for the O.P.A.'s country in a few weeks, and glad of it. There is no place like it. Minor Army background but too old to be an effective GI and the Army couldn't find a "brass hat" to fit me. So to pay taxes—and like it.

TO clarify the theme of "One for France and One for Me," which opens our issue this month, Georges Surdez sends us the following footnote to the story—

When I was ten years old, I often listened to an old French farmer spinning yarns during the long summer twilight. Many of his stories concerned what he termed "The Terrible Year," the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. He had fought the invaders as a *franc-tireur*, the equivalent of today's Maquisard, and some of his tales were rather grim. He had repeated them so frequently that he seldom changed a word, let alone a whole sentence, and one of them

opened thus: "War in your own village is more horrible than war elsewhere. For if you are a soldier in uniform, you know your enemy, you know that he is also the enemy of the pal on your right and the pal on your left. But during an invasion, fighting mostly by night and in ordinary clothes, within sound of your church bells, well, my friends, you may be taken and shot because you stole some apples when you were eight or kissed a girl when you were fifteen. Somebody will turn you in who wouldn't sell out anyone else. And if you happen to find out, years later, who betrayed your father, your brother, your friends, there's nothing you can do about it. Because if you wait behind some stone wall some dark night and let him have the load of a fowling-piece, well, you're a plain assassin and you go to the guillotine and sneeze your last sneeze in bran."

That old man had a tag line: *"C'n'est pas joli, mais c'est l'homme."* Meaning: It isn't pretty, but it's human nature. He also told his listeners that they would never see anything like 1870. He was wrong, many saw much worse, the four endless years of Occupation. France is cleaning house, and as I study the trials, I often hear the old chap's voice: "It isn't pretty, but it's human nature." What happened in France, both the good and the bad, would happen anywhere under similar conditions. And in the future, bored pupils in the schools of France will read about Laval and his ilk with the same boredom as they read about the Constable of Bourbon and the Prince de Condé.

There was an occasion when following a crushing national defeat, the losers sent to their conquerors an embassy headed by an old chief, a venerable warrior who had, many years before, repeatedly beaten those same conquerors, hence presumably had their respect. Of course, one recognizes immediately the French disaster of 1940, the sending of Old Marshal Pétain to sign an agreement with Hitler and the victorious Nazis. Twenty-four years before, Pétain had checked the Germans at Verdun and he felt entitled to a soldier's treatment.

But it happens to be from Caesar's Commentaries. The Helvetians, having suffered a terrific mauling at the hands of the Romans, their leader, Orgetorix, a suicide, had dug up Old Divico to head a delegation to the victors. Divico had bounced the Romans about during his younger days, but he proved to be a poor diplomat and told Caesar what could be done with the terms offered. So the fighting resumed, and an additional two hundred thousand Helvetians bit the dust before the clans yielded. It is idle to wonder at this late date just what would have happened if Divico had been a smoothie. About as idle as it is to speculate about what would have happened if Pétain had been as stiff-necked as Divico. One cannot help feeling pity for Pétain, few of us would care to be judged by our errors beyond the age of eighty. General de Gaulle, who had served in his regiment, evidently pitied him. It is claimed that he was always a defeatist, yet I have seen both of the fine slogans of the French Army of 1914-1918 attributed to him: *"On les aura!"* which can be translated as "We'll take 'em!" and *"Ils ne passeront pas!"* which is the famous "They shall not pass!" As for the statements made about him by Marshal Foch, Clemenceau, Wilson and others, just let us wait and see what the generals of today have to say about each other in their memoirs. That also may not be pretty, but it will be human nature.

Once you start comparing the past and the present, analogies crowd in very fast. For instance, the Romans constructed a line of fortifications to prevent the invasion of Gaul, and the Helvetians got through somewhere, just as the Nazis flanked the Maginot Line, so that the issue had to be settled in the field. Just as some measures were taken to feed the defeated Italians in our days, to prevent starvation and disorder, the Romans supplied the defeated Helvetians with food—because they did not want them to starve and die out, fearing that the country thus left open would lure the truculent Teutonic clans to the border of the Empire. When the French expressed the same fear of the Teutons in the Nineteen-Twenties, they were called chauvinists, imperialists, alarmists. Remember?

ALFRED POWERS appends the following to point out some of the research problems in which he became involved in writing "Chains for Columbus." We're often as much interested in the difficulties an author has to surmount during the birth pangs of a story as we are in the finished product and feel that you, too, may welcome the chance to have a behind-the-scenes look at a serial-in-creation even as the completed narrative unfolds.

Fiction characters are said to be Sufferers or Doers. Columbus was both and so made a clear-cut presentation of his personality much more difficult than if he had been one thing or the other. He was a Doer, yet a philosophical one. His marvelous achievements were based upon meditation and study and upon a persistence rare in this world. Objective and practical on the one hand, subjective and dreamy on the other, the combination made him rather peculiar, hard to get along with, and decidedly unhappy.

Perhaps no man who did so much for a country as he did for Spain was ever the receiver of so much ingratitude for doing it. Yet if he had been a different type of person, he could have taken a good deal of the bad treatment, a good deal of the neglect, and a good deal of the hostility in his stride. He was a great hand to brood over slights and he was particularly a great hand to exact the full measure of any

agreement, although the original conditions might have changed so as to make alterations obviously reasonable.

He had the Spanish sovereigns on the hip all right, in the contract covering the voyage of 1492, and when it became honestly impracticable for them to carry out the agreement to the letter he nevertheless held out against any concessions. Of course, Fonseca and the king were slippery customers not above subterfuge, and Queen Isabella has had more than her due in the sentimental versions of school histories, but at least they did not repudiate his claims outright.

There were contradictions in Columbus' personality making it hard to arrive at any clear-cut delineation of the man. He was merciless in dealing with the natives and quite willing to enslave them. As governor of Hispaniola, he was even quick to hang unruly Spaniards, yet when there was strong and vigorous rebellion or mutiny, as was frequently the case, he would tolerate it for a long time before taking any definite steps, and often would forgive the rebels if they knelt down abjectly at his feet and voiced their regret and remorse.

What he really looked like cannot honestly be told in detailed accuracy. There are many pictures of him of an imaginative nature, for no great painter of the period actually did his portrait from life. At a distance of four and a half centuries there is a great deal altogether that is not known about him. We don't even know how old he was, the historians differing by a matter of ten years. In "Chains for Columbus," the author was faced with the alternative of presenting the Doer with more dramatic qualities of action and quick decision than he actually had in particular situations though they were his in the broad, or letting the Sufferer dominate the picture—an old man, complaining and sad.

The lugubrious tone with which fact writers have filled volumes, has considerably obscured the resourcefulness, the daring, the achievements, the adventures, which this amazing man crowded into thirteen years of his life. In any case, while there have been many poems, few stories or novels or plays have been written about him.

The method of determining the mileage of the ships was not taken from history but from an old book on navigation. It is the custom of novelists to utilize paraphernalia economically. Many things are not just tossed in but as few as possible to recreate a slice of another age, and these few perhaps do service several times. In this respect the cork float was a very happy property. It was used to bring up the first voyage when Columbus deceived his crew in regard to the distance he had gone. It provided some necessary invention for the trip across, helping to give the voyage the illusion of reality. And later it had an important purpose when Zorilla walked the plank.

Similarly, economy was secured by using the same two horses throughout. Not to pun, it is as bad to change horses in the middle of a story as in the middle of a stream.

Substantially as described, the great storm occurred, the Spanish fleet was destroyed, and Columbus saved his ships by being a good navigator. Of course, the warning has been considerably dramatized in the fiction story, although a warning was actually given. In the interest of the economy referred to, Santo Domingo, which was destroyed in that storm and rebuilt on the other side of the river, was retained in the story as it had been originally, the first permanent town in the Americas.

Some research problems of rather an unexpected nature came up in regard to presenting a scene approximately four and a half centuries old. The by-words for Francisco and Pico of Hispaniola were the result of long, long searches. The Spanish dictionaries, even the large ones in the reference departments of public libraries, are very sedate affairs. Examination was made of all of these that were available. In addition, a considerable number of books—poetry, essays, histories, and fiction—were rapidly read for no other reason than to pick up Spanish by-words of the period of 1500. A good many hours were spent in this way. A whole volume might not yield a thing. That Cortes swore by the beard of his grandfather is historical. Pico's expression "By Hurtado's cat" and Francisco's "By Lucifer's Adam's apple" were synthesized. The old Spaniards used to swear by a cat, but it wasn't Hurtado's; and they took oaths by certain people's Adam's apple but it wasn't Lucifer's.

BOTH of our *Ask Adventure* gun experts —Donegan Wiggins who answers queries on rifles and pistols and Roy Tinney who covers the shotgun field—are concerned about the potential dangers lying in the vast arsenal of foreign souvenir weapons that are being brought home by returning GIs. We are glad to print a word of caution from each of these men. They know what they're talking about and paying attention to what they say may save a bad accident—or worse.

We'll let Don Wiggins have the floor first. He says—

> Many relic arms are coming home in the hands of returning GIs, but not all are safe to use. Some are real booby-traps, intentional or otherwise.
>
> Two particularly are in mind; the P-38 German pistol MUST have the locking block in its proper position, under the breech of the barrel, when fired, or trouble will be sure to result. Any gunsmith can examine the pistol to ensure the block's proper order.

(Continued on page 145)

THE TRAIL AHEAD

From the atom-bomb-pitted waste that's Nippon, where sullen die-hard fanatics still conspire to carry on their hateful cause—and half way around the world again to the turbulent precincts of the Middle East where, though the war has stopped, the battle for petroleum still goes on.

"THE SWORD OF SHINTO"

By SIDNEY HERSCHEL SMALL

—the finest "Koropok" story yet, takes Llewelyn Davies back to Tokyo to help G-2 in the final phases of the clean-up job. And who could be better fitted for the task? He'd masqueraded as a pariah Ainu in the very heart of Japland all through the war, and could still spot chicanery among the cherry blossoms—or hear the whetting of a sword in the shadowy recesses of a Shinto shrine—when others saw only evidences of cooperation with the *Amerika-jin* and heard nothing but the mumbling of priestly prayers.

"THE OLD OIL"

By GORDON MacCREAGH

—takes you to Damascus to watch another type of American "agent" make a play for petroleum in a battle of guns and knives and wits against some of the wiliest competition in Islam. When a pipeline has to run across the territory of three different governments and a couple of "spheres of influence" it takes guts as well as an unlimited expense account to sew up the concessions!

Plus an uproariously funny South Sea trading adventure—"The Betrayal of Bulkhead Bean"—by Albert Richard Wetjen . . . . A gripping tale of the dirt-track automobile racers—"Adam Was a Chump"—by Coleman Meyer . . . . Additional short stories by Nard Jones, James Atlee Phillips, T. F. Tracy and others . . . . The next smashing instalment of "Chains for Columbus". . . And the usual assortment of informative fact stories, features and departments you can find only in—

ON SALE JANUARY 9th

ASK ADVENTURE

Information You Can't Get Elsewhere

THE men who guard our borders.

Query: What are the duties and activities of the U. S. Border Patrol?
—Pfc. Louis Hennes, 36014786
49th Fighter Control Squadron
A.P.O. 248, c/o Postmaster, San Francisco.

Reply by Francis H. Bent:—The United States Immigration Border Patrol is a uniformed police organization, and its primary function is to detect and prevent the smuggling and the illegal entry of aliens into the United States. The work involves patroling along and in the vicinity of the international land boundaries by automobile, on horseback, or afoot, in search of aliens who have entered, or who are attempting to enter, the United States unlawfully. Patrol activities include the stopping for inspection purposes of various kinds of vehicles in which there is reason to believe aliens are being brought into the United States; boarding and searching freight and passenger trains, regularly at night, and frequently while the trains are in motion; watching from concealment crossing-places on the international boundaries suspected of being used by persons engaged in illegal activities; making extended camping details in desert or woods, during which the officers must rely entirely upon their own ability and resourcefulness for sustenance and shelter; observing the Border from 85- or 100-foot observation towers; and, in general, investigating violations of the immigration laws. Border patrolmen must make numerous arrests, sometimes of dangerous criminals. Shooting affrays are not infrequent.

The duties of the position are arduous, the hours irregular and long, and exposure to all kinds of climatic conditions is necessitated. There is much night work. The officers are subject to call 24 hours a day; they are occasionally detailed away from their official stations for days or weeks at a time; and transfers may be frequent. Numerous Border patrol stations are located, of necessity, in small isolated communities, many of which are regarded as undesirable places in which to live.

The foregoing two paragraphs are taken from the description of duties as published in a notice of examination for the position.

Positions are filled by competitive examination held under the U. S. Civil Service Commission. Applicant must be a citizen of the U.S.; between 21 and 34 years old, inclusive; at least 5'8" tall, without shoes; weigh at least 145 pounds; well proportioned as to height and weight; of active type; good muscular development; in good health and sound physical condition; pass a very rigid physical examination; show that, within 5 years immediately preceding closing date for receipt of applications he was for at least 1 year actively and regularly engaged in outdoor activities requiring endurance, agility, vitality, alertness, and practical judgment; have at least 1 year of experience in driving a motor vehicle.

Acceptable outdoor experience is such as that of active member and director of athletic organizations sponsoring a systematic program of physical training; park ranger, forest ranger, city and state police; fireman having training programs; Civilian Conservation Corps on full-time basis; member of military or naval organizations who show they have actually engaged in a systematic program of outdoor activity.

If you wish to enter the Border Patrol, I would suggest that you write to the Secretary, U. S. Civil Service Commission, Washington, D. C., shortly before you are ready to leave the Army, and ask to have your name placed on file to be notified of the next examination for the Border Patrol.

Having served in the Armed Forces of the United States you will, of course, be able to establish military preference. This

will allow you an extra five points in your examination ratings and give you certain other advantages. For fuller information on this preference ask the Commission for their pamphlet on Veteran Preference.

THE *boleadores* of the South American Gaucho.

Query:—Can you tell me where I will be able to buy an Argentine or Peruvian bola—the three-ball-on-a-rope equipment that the South American cowboys used as we do a lasso?

Will appreciate it if you can give me this information and advise just about how much a genuine one should cost, or how to make an authentic one if they are not available commercially.

—E. R. McGowan
706 S. Edison Ave.
Tampa, 6, Fla.

Reply by Edgar Young:—*Boleadores* is the correct name for the implement or device you inquire about, although the name "bolas" not "bola" is mainly used by foreigners. They were originally used by the aborigines of Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay. They were never used by the cattlemen of Peru unless it is a very recent innovation.

Years ago when I was sojourning among the nomadic Tehuelches I saw many of the original versions of the contrivance and the balls of the weapon were made by sewing up pulverized iron-ore or other heavy stone in rawhide pouches. The sewing was done with a bone needle and *guanaco* sinew was used for thread. The thongs were also made of *guanaco* sinew, an ordinary sennet plait being used.

Three balls were used, one being held in the hand while the other two, at the end of the thongs, were whirled above the head before casting. The three thongs were spliced together at a common center and the distance to each of the balls was the same, so that it did not make any difference which ball was held while the other two were being whirled.

The original users of the *boleadores* were extremely fast runners and they ran on foot to make the throws, but when the Spaniards came the Indians readily adopted the horse to their needs and from the back of a galloping horse the device was very efficient in bringing down ostriches, guanacos, pumas, and wild cattle.

The Gauchos are the mixed descendants of the Indians and Spaniards and they became very proficient with horses and also with the *boleadores*. There are official records of casts with *boleadores* at local rodeos in Uruguay which are almost incredible to those unacquainted with the use of the implements; but I found no trouble in believing the records because I have seen long casts made and I know how the speed and lift of a flying horse is added to the momentum gathered by the rapid whirl of the *boleadores* at the end of the thongs. I also know how shrewdly these people figure the trajectory against the angle at which the quarry is running and they rarely fail to bring down what they aim at. Guanacos, ostriches, and pumas can really take off, and it requires extremely good skill to bring them down hundreds of yards away.

Later, as these countries began to be settled by incoming Europeans and North Americans, the trading posts and little stores began to stock cast-iron balls with eyelets or rings for the attaching of thongs and these, and sometimes leaden balls, were adopted by the Gauchos. Thongs began to be made of rawhide, three or four braids being used and then the thong was rolled between two boards until it came out smooth and not much larger in diameter than a lead pencil. This method was also used in making lariats. The aborogines had never used lariats and even the Gauchos were a bit slow in adopting their use but they did become very proficient with them later on.

The Indians used the throwing *boleadores* and also a single ball attached to one thong that they used for killing the animal after it was entangled and brought down. The early Gauchos just had these two implements also, but they later adopted the knife from the Spaniards; and the twelve-inch knife they now carry tucked in loops at the back of their wide belts is their most prized possession. The whole southern half of South America was settled by men who never used firearms.

I don't know of any place here in the United States where *boleadores* can be bought although I have seen them in museums and in private collections several times and all these were the modern type of weapon with iron balls and some of the thongs looked to be factory made. I would not know anywhere that the primitive type could be obtained although it might be possible that some of the modren Tehuelches, or Big Feet Indians, down around the Straits of Magellan might still have them.

HITCH your Skindervinken to a guitar.

Query:—Several years ago I had a Rickenbacker electric guitar which I was unwise enough to sell before the war.

I am an amateur radio mechanic and have a twenty-watt amplifier and am sure I could make an electric guitar pick-up if I had a general idea of how they are made.

Could you give me a few hints on how to build an electric guitar pick-up?

—V. E. Sample
423 Henderson Street
Grass Valley, California

Reply by Donald McNicol:—There are various ways of hooking up an amplifier and loudspeaker to a guitar, but the simplest I have seen is to fasten a small car-

bon microphone to the waist of the guitar and carry a pair of wires to the amplifier, connecting to the amplifier where a mike would connect the input.

Parts may still be hard to get. There used to be a miniature mike called a Skindervinken button but they are scarce. Any mike would do which could be fastened securely mechanically to the base of the guitar. There is a "speaker's" broadcasting mike used with public address systems which is small enough, and there are hearing-aid mikes. The mike MUST be fastened rigidly to the frame of the guitar.

CATTLE—Northwest to Southwest.

Query:—I am writing to find out about Florida as a cattle-raising country. I understand they raise lots of cattle down there. What part is best suited for livestock? What diseases are they subject to? How is the climate? Does one have to lease or own land or can one run on government land? Am an experienced cattle man with plenty of means to start on and see myself through. Have raised cattle for thirty years but want to find a country where I can get away from winter feeding.

—Pink Becker
Oregon

Reply by Hapsburg Liebe:—Florida is one of the oldest cattle states, and there have been, and still are, some big ranches here. But this ranching is so different from what you are used to that you should come down and see things for yourself before you make a move in this direction.

Cowboys carry long-lashed whips instead of ropes, as a rule and are they masters of those whips! 18 to 22 feet in the lash, and they can snip a cigarette from your mouth and never touch you, cut a rattler's head off, etc., etc. The ranges are so dotted with trees and thickets that you can't see far in any direction, and dogs are much used in cow hunts. Florida doesn't always have enough rain for the higher ranges, and in dry seasons cattle must be kept around swamps, marshes, and bay-heads. Old-timers burned the dry grass off in order to have tender new grass, but this is more or less frowned on now because fire spoiled so much timber (most of it is pine, which burns easily).

Disease? The fever tick has been a curse to the Florida cattleman. And there is the screw-worm, a perfect devil of a nuisance. These worms must be watched for and killed. For fever ticks the cattle are dipped at intervals; state law, I believe. The old Spanish breeds of cattle withstood tick and screw-worm best, but they were tough, stringy cattle, and of late years Brahma has been introduced with more or less success, as has Hereford and black-poll Angus.

Most of the ranches I know about were, or are, in the south central portions of the state, for instance, around Kissimmee and Arcadia. But there was a big outfit, the 7K (seven brothers named Kersey) in Pasco County northeast of here (St. Petersburg). If you decide to come to Florida to look around, visit Kissimmee and Arcadia. Near Arcadia you will find a cattleman named Vernon C. Hollingsworth, who runs two or three brands, and he can tell you anything you may want to know about cattle-raising; and he will, I'm sure, if you will mention my name. As for range, I can't tell you how you would go about getting range. So much of the big territory is owned by big companies, who must have bought it for a song. I imagine you could lease range for not more than that. There are vast expanses of land with no human habitation whatever on it, down toward the Everglades, you know.

ON conductivity when bundling in a sleep bag—expert to expert.

Query:—I would like to get your interpretation of the following:

The conductivity of various items are given as follows:

Kapok (loosely packed)	.24
Wool (pure)	.26
Eiderdown (dry)	.33

Is the lowest conductivity of kapok to be construed that it is warmer (for a sleeping bag) than wool or eiderdown?

—C. P. Fordyce, M. D.
118½ North 8th St.
St. Joseph, Mo.

Reply by Victor Shaw:—This term "conductivity" I take to be just a trade term referring to contained air in the material. At least, that's the way it works out practically.

For one thing, a light and loosely woven material permits foul air to escape from an enclosed space such as a sleeping bag. In addition, the padding must have plenty of resilience, to prevent close racking during steady use. Thus, when such material offers both elasticity and softness, it is ideal for the purpose.

In the three types you've named, kapok is placed lowest in scale, because it is only temporarily elastic; i.e., loses resilience and gets packed rather solidly with continued use, so it offers less resistence to cold, besides being physically less comfortable. Wool, especially the coarse kind, is much better. Eider down, particularly that taken from the real arctic duck, seems the best obtainable. Rated high, for this reason; but price is higher due to the added difficulty of obtaining it in sufficient quantity.

It's the lack of interior air-space, you see, which makes kapok not so good, especially with steady use. Same reason behind using an air-space in walls of buildings in cold districts.

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Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **Do Not** send questions to the magazine. Be definite; explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The magazine does not assume any responsibility. **No Reply** will be made to requests for partners, financial backing or employment.

★*(Enclose addressed envelope with International Reply Coupon.)*

Notice: Many of our *Ask Adventure* experts are still engaged in government service of one kind or another. Some are on active duty in the Army or Navy, others serving in an executive or advisory capacity on various of the boards and offices which were set up to hasten the nation's war effort. Almost without exception these men consented to remain on our staff, carry on their work for the magazine if humanly possible, but with the understanding that for the duration such work was to be of secondary importance to their official duties. This was as it should be, and when you didn't receive answers to queries as promptly as we all wished, your patience was appreciated. Foreign mails are still slow and uncertain, many are still curtailed drastically, but now that the war is over we can hope for a more expanded, smoother functioning *Ask Adventure* service very soon. Bear with us and we'll continue to try to serve you as speedily as possible.

ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS

SPORTS AND HOBBIES

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure.*

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, care of *Adventure.*

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Matawan, N. J.

Big Game Hunting in North America: *Guides and equipment*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure.*

Boxing—COL. JOHN V. GROMBACH, care of *Adventure.*

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Canoeing: *Paddling, sailing, cruising, regattas*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 1325 So. Main St., Princeton, Ill.

Coins and Medals—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th, N. Y. C.

Dogs—FREEMAN LLOYD, care of *Adventure.*

Fencing—COL. JOHN V. GROMBACH, care of *Adventure.*

First Aid—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

Fishing: *Fresh water; fly and bait casting; bait casting outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN ALDEN KNIGHT, 929 W. 4th St., Williamsport, Penna.

Fishing, Salt water: *Bottom fishing, surf casting; trolling; equipment and locations*—C. BLACKBURN MILLER, care of *Adventure.*

Fly and Bait Casting Tournament—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Health-Building Activities. Hiking — DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motorcycling: *Regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, care of *Adventure.*

Mountain Climbing—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 6520 Romaine St., Hollywood, Calif.

Old Songs—ROBERT WHITE, 913 W. 7th St., Los Angeles, Calif.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *Foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, 170 Liberty Rd., Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns, American and Foreign: Wing Shooting and Field Trials—ROY S. TINNEY, Chatham, New Jersey.

Small Boating: *Skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y., N. Y.

Swords, Spears, Pole Arms and Armor—MAJOR R. E. GARDNER, care of *Adventure.*

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—MURL E. THRUSH, New York Athletic Club, 59th St. and 7th Ave., N. Y., N. Y.

Yachting—A. R. KNAUER, 6720 Jeffery Ave., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American, north of the Panama Canal, customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Entomology: *Insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Penna.

Forestry, North American: *The U. S. Forestry Service, our national forests, conservation and use*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure.*

Forestry, Tropical: *Tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, care of U. S. Forest Service, Glenn Bldg., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: *Reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, care of *Adventure.*

Mining, Prospecting, and Precious Stones: *Anywhere in North America. Outfitting; any mineral, metallic or non-metallic*—VICTOR SHAW, care of *Adventure.*

Ornithology: *Birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 5 Minerva Pl., Bronx, N. Y.

Photography: *Outfitting, work in out-of-the way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Radio: *Telegraphy, telephony, history, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, care of *Adventure.*

Railroads: *In the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure.*

Sunken Treasure: Treasure ships; deep-sea diving; *salvage operations and equipment*—LIEUTENANT HARRY E. RIESEBERG, care of *Adventure.*

Taxidermy—EDWARD B. LANG, 156 Joralemon St., Belleville, N. J.

Wildcrafting and Trapping—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE

Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, care of *Adventure.*

The Merchant Marine—GORDON MACALLISTER, care of *Adventure.*

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—ALEC CAVADAS, King Edward High School, Vancouver, B. C.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, care of *Adventure.*

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

Philippine Islands—BUCK CONNER, Conner Field, Quartzsite, Ariz.

★**New Guinea**—L. P. B. ARMIT, care of *Adventure.*

★**New Zealand, Cook Island, Samoa**—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania**—ALAN FOLEY, 243 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands**—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, No. 1 Flat "Scarborough," 83 Sidney Rd., Manley N. S. W., Australia.

Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, Dept. of Anthropology, Columbia University, N. Y., N. Y.

Africa, Part 1 ★*Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **2** Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya—GORDON MACCREAGH, 2231 W. Harbor Drive, St. Petersburg, Florida. **3** *Tripoli, Sahara caravans* — CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure.* **4** *Bechuanaland, Southwest Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, care of *Adventure.* **5** ★*Cape Province, Orange Free State, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal, Rhodesia*—PETER FRANKLIN, Box 1491, Durban, Natal, So. Africa.

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LOST TRAILS

NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to *Lost Trails* will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and concerning women are declined, as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or that may not seem suitable to the editors for any other reason. No charge is made for publication of notices.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Carl Hatfield, born in western Kentucky, last heard of at Hardinsburg, Kentucky, in 1939, where he was in the taxi business, please communicate with his son, Pvt. James Ralph Hatfield, 35981592, 1-2 RR, AGFRD-2, Fort Ord, California.

Karl Miller, 1522 Mary Street, Marinette, Wisconsin, wishes to hear from anyone knowing the whereabouts of David Edwin (or Edward) Rivers, age 50, last known to be at 919 Bellameade Avenue, Evansville, Indiana.

Roy H. Edman, General Delivery, Riverside, California, would like to locate the following people: H. Goodwin, his son, Reece Goodwin, or his daughters, Rebecca, Lucinda, Minnie and Naomi Goodwin, or Ruth Doyle, last heard of in Wichita Falls, Texas, in 1921.

I would like to hear from anyone knowing the address of W. F. (Billie) Benz, who used to ride rodeo in California some years ago. He was last heard of in Willits, California. C. R. Douglas, 628 Del Mar, Pasadena 5, California.

I would like to get in touch with anyone knowing the whereabouts of Joe Zimmer or any of his family. He formerly lived in Marion, Indiana, where he worked in a glass factory. M. Shulaw, 506 Dubois, Lawrenceville, Illinois.

Would like to hear from or about Leonard Owens last heard from in Indianapolis in 1944; George J. Snyder of Clarksburg, W. Va., last heard from at U.S.N. Receiving Station, Norfolk, Va., 1943; Lt. Robert Hairston 3rd, was in 15th Air Force, home in N. Carolina; Cpl. Pennington (nicknamed Penrod) 11th. Inf., Ft. Benj. Harrison in 1941; Leo Corns, lived in Indianapolis in 1944, now believed to be in Chicago; Sgt. Richard Thompson, 125th. Inf. Reg., Camp Maxey, Texas, 1944; Pvt. Douglas Williams or Wm. Douglas, home around Eldorado, Ill., last heard from in 11th. Inf. Reg., Ft. Benj. Harrison, 1941. Any information will be appreciated by G. E. Ziegler, care of Adventure —Lost Trails.

(Continued from page 137)

In rifles, be sure the bolt is in good condition; I've seen relic rifles of the Preview with the locking lugs missing from the bolt head; a shot would have killed or blinded the shooter, I'm positive.

In the German shotguns, DON'T USE SMOKELESS POWDER IN BARRELS WITH FIGURES IN THE STEEL. BLACK POWDER IS THE PROPER FODDER FOR A TWIST OR DAMASCUS BARREL ONLY. These barrels are of steel ribbons, welded together, like one curled about a finger, instead of being bored from a solid steel rod, as our American guns are made today. Do NOT experiment with them. Ask the local gunsmith, or some acknowledged firearms authority, about the safety of any captured firearm.

And Roy Tinney warns, in turn—

Our boys have sent home and brought home a lot of European shotguns; many more will arrive in the future. Nice relics, but treat them as trophies to adorn the wall of den and rumpus room. Sound this warning; do not shoot them unless and until the arm can be properly tested by someone with the skill and the facilities for proof-firing.

1—Foreign shotgun shells are not loaded as heavily as ours and those guns were not built for American ammunition.

2—You have no way of knowing if the gun has been proof-fired.

3—The piece you have can so easily be a "reject" picked up in some abandoned or captured arms plant.

4—There is no way of knowing if the metal was properly heat treated or if any heat treatment was applied.

5—The size of the chambers and bores vary, there being no standardization such as we have in this country. Many of the chambers are too short for our shells. When the crimp is opened it extends into the bore, thereby creating abnormal breech pressures.

In a recent letter my old friend, Win O' Windham points out: "Your gun may have been made under starvation conditions in a factory subject to bombing and it is only common sense to realize that any machinist or mechanic employed in a foreign arms plant where his weekly production was measured out in food allowance cards and his family starving, would scarcely hesitate to pass hastily over many defects in the knowledge he would never have to shoot the gun himself. So don't you shoot it either."

Admire them, discuss them and let the tales grow tall, but do your shooting with safe, sound American guns.

We think both these messages of caution are important and well worth heeding. Read 'em again!—K.S.W.

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(Continued from page 93)

Mike asked, "Then you hadn't the least idea that you were walking into a doublecross."

His strength failing fast, Blackie wanted to know what he meant by that.

I told him, "Xaver called the Bureau tonight and tipped us that he'd be at the warehouse at two—that is, he tipped Juanita and told her to tell us."

Blackie cursed him weakly.

"But what I want to know," I said, "is how, if he doublecrossed you by tipping us, he figured to get his cut? He and Juanita were planning to scram to some place called Tenochtitlan, probably south of the Border. You ever hear of the joint?"

Blackie said that he had not.

Mike took from his pocket the murder warrant naming Blackie Harris and Xaver Galdos for the murder of Pop Reynolds in the Consolidated Currency Exchange stick-up, and showed it to Blackie. "Just for the sake of the record, which one of you shot the old man?" he asked.

Someone behind me said, "Tell the truth."

I turned around and told the interne, "The lieutenant is perfectly capable of conducting the questioning."

"I didn't say a word," the interne protested,

"And don't butt in again," I told him, then turned back for a double-take. *The two voices weren't the same.*

I swallowed a lump in my throat and looked at Blackie. He had heard the voice, too. His eyes sunken in his skull, he was staring over Mike's head. "So that's how you did it, huh? Why you damn, clever, dirty Indian."

Mike put his lips closer to his ear. "What's he talking about?" he asked.

The nurse shook her head. "He's delirious."

I wasn't so certain. I was beginning to see, or thought I was beginning to see, a lot of things.

"Who killed him?" Mike insisted.

"Go to hell!" Blackie told him—and died.

The nurse pulled the sheet over his face.

Mike and I walked down to the lobby. Major Marks was waiting with a first sergeant who had the warehouse company roster. "There's no Galdos on the rolls," he protested, "and the sergeant says there never has been."

"But there has to be," Mike protested. "He knew all about the stuff, even down to the number of cases."

The sergeant, a grizzled veteran, shook his head. "That may be, Lieutenant. But Xaver Galdos is not a common name." He took a news clipping from his tunic pocket. "In fact the only time I ever heard it before was when I read this in last night's paper. And the lad wasn't a soldier, he was a marine."

Mike took the clipping from his hand. I read it over his shoulder. It was datelined Pearl Harbor, two days before, and read in part:

> Among those killed in the crash of the homeward-bound bomber was Sergeant Xaver Galdos, for whose gallantry in action and bravery above and beyond the call of duty, his commanding officer had recommended . . .

Mike looked at the dateline again, handed back the clipping and stopped the young interne as he passed. "Look. You're fresh from college, Doctor. Where would Tenochtitlan be?"

The interne grinned. "You have me there, unless it's a kind of a Mexican Valhalla. That was the old name of Mexico City when Montezuma was the big shot, along with Mexitli, the god of war."

"I—see," Mike said soberly. "Thanks."

He got rid of the major and the sergeant and we walked out to the car. Dawn was painting the horizon crimson. Halfway back to the office, he spoke for the first time.

"Well I'll be a son-of-a-gun. What do you think, Charlie?"

I told him I didn't know.

"Neither do I," he admitted.

And there being nothing we could prove either way, we let it go at that.

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If we're really serious about wanting our men to get what they have so richly earned, we'll buy *extra* Bonds in the Victory Loan.

Now's the time. Let's have a show of hands—with wallets—to prove how much we really want to hear that old familiar step and that familiar voice yelling "It's *me!*" Let's prove, with pocketbooks, that we can do our job as well as they did theirs.

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